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THE UNHALLOWED HARVEST

HOMER GREENE

1, Fiction, American

NBC

Career

The Unhallowed Harvest

The Unhallowed Harvest

By

HOMER GREENE

Author of "The Lincoln Conscript," "Pickett's Gap," etc.

L.C.

PHILADELPHIA
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The Unhallowed Harvest

CHAPTER I

AN ENFORCED VERDICT

THE Reverend Robert Bruce Farrar entered the Common Pleas court-room and made his way down the center aisle to the railing that enclosed the space allotted to members of the bar. Had he been an ordinary citizen he would have stopped there. But he was not an ordinary citizen. Therefore he passed on into the railed enclosure to find his seat. He was rector of Christ Church, the oldest, wealthiest and most prominent religious organization in the city. Yet that fact alone would not have given him the distinction he enjoyed in this community. He was also an eloquent preacher, a profound scholar, a man of attractive and vigorous personality. Apparently he was not lacking in any of the qualities that make for success in the administration of the affairs of a large city parish. He had been rector of Christ Church for two years, and his worth and ability had been, during that time, abundantly proven. Moreover, by reason of his genial and sympathetic nature, he had endeared himself to the people of the parish, especially to the more humble members of his flock. He had, as the saying is, "a passion for humanity." To those who toiled, who were in trouble or affliction, his heart went out in unaffected sympathy. He gave of his best to encourage, comfort

and relieve them. Indeed, the only criticism made concerning him—and that was a suggestion rather than a criticism—was that possibly he neglected the souls of the rich to care for the bodies of the poor. He was deeply interested in problems of social ethics and economy, in fact in all problems having to do with the general welfare. He was a student of human character in all of its phases and manifestations. This it was, doubtless, that led him into becoming a frequenter of the courts. It was for this reason that the trial of causes had for him a strong and unfailing attraction. He was fond of looking on at the visible working of the machinery of the law. For there are few public places where human motives, as disclosed by human conduct, are brought more frequently and startlingly to the surface than in the court-room. It was a place, therefore, where the reverend gentleman was not only a frequent, but also a welcome visitor. He had a standing invitation to enter the bar enclosure, and to occupy a chair among his friends the lawyers. There had been occasions, indeed, occasions of great public interest, when the presiding judge, who chanced to be his senior warden, had had his rector up to sit beside him on the bench. But the case on trial this day was not an unusual one. It had attracted no particular attention, either among lawyers or laymen. Yet the rector of Christ Church was deeply interested in it. He had attended, so far as he had been able to do so, the sessions of the court in which it was being heard. It was what is known among lawyers as a negligence case. A workman, employed by a large manufacturing concern, had been seriously and permanently injured while engaged in the performance of the duties of his employment. An elevator on which he was riding, while making his way from one part of the factory to another, had suddenly gone wrong, and had plunged down through five stories, to become a heap of wreckage at the bottom of the shaft. And out from among

the mass of splintered wood and broken and twisted iron and steel, he had been drawn, scarcely less broken and twisted and crushed than the inanimate things among which he had lain. An action had been brought, in his name, against the employing company, to compel it to compensate him for his injuries. This was the second day of the trial. It was late in the afternoon, and the case was drawing to a close. When the rector of Christ Church entered the court-room, Philip Westgate, for the defense, was making his closing argument to the jury. With relentless logic he was tearing down the structure which the experienced and skilful attorney for the plaintiff had built up. Although one of the younger members of a brilliant bar, it was freely predicted that the day was not far distant when he would be its leader. This thought lay distinctly in the mind of Richard Malleson, president of the defendant company, as he sat at the counsel's table, and followed, with keen interest and satisfaction, the course of the argument.

He was not so witless as to believe that the jury would find in favor of his company, in view of the strong human appeal that had been made to them, and still would be made to them, on behalf of the plaintiff; yet his countenance expressed no anxiety, for his lawyer had assured him that, regardless of any adverse verdict, the case fell within a rule of law that would prevent a recovery. So, fair type of the prosperous business man, portly, well-dressed, shrewd-eyed, square-jawed, he sat contentedly and listened while Westgate whittled away his opponent's case.

The plaintiff also was in court, sitting near by. But whether or not he understood what the learned counsel for the defense was saying, whether or not he heard his voice at all, no one, looking into his face, would have been able to discover. He sat there in a wheel-chair, a plaid robe covering his palsied and misshapen legs, his chin resting heavily on the broad scarf that covered his

breast, his dull, gray face showing neither anxiety nor interest as Westgate made havoc of the evidence on which his case was built. To all outward appearance, though his whole economic future was at stake, he neither knew nor cared what was going on about him. For two days the rector of Christ Church had watched him as he sat there, listless, motionless, looking neither to the right nor left, apparently as unconcerned as though it were a stranger's fate with which learned counsel were playing battledore and shuttlecock across the traverse jury box.

But if the plaintiff was indifferent, his wife, who sat by him, was not. She at least was alive and alert. Nothing escaped her observation and consideration; no point presented by counsel, no ruling made by the court, no statement given by witnesses, no expression on the faces of jurors, as evidence and argument fell upon their ears and sank into their presumably plastic minds. She was, apparently, still in her early thirties. She was neatly and cheaply clad, as became a workingman's wife. Her figure was well-proportioned and supple, and her oval face, lighted with expressive and intelligent dark eyes, was strikingly handsome. She was following Westgate's argument with intense but scornful interest. That she appreciated its strength and its brilliance was apparent; but it was also apparent that she was not in the least dismayed. To the clergyman, student of human character and emotions, her countenance presented a greater attraction than the attraction offered by eloquent counsel. He looked at her, wondered at her, sympathized with her.

Nor was the rector the only person in the room whose attention had been drawn to the woman's face rather than to the eloquence of the speaking lawyer. At the clergyman's side sat Barry Malleson, son of the president of the defendant company. He, also, had been in constant attendance at the trial. Not that his presence was necessary there; but, holding a nominally

important, if not vitally necessary, position with the defendant company, he felt, as he expressed it, that he should be present to hearten up counsel in the case, and to give moral encouragement and protection to his father on whom a heavy verdict might fall with peculiar severity. With one hand ungloved, toying with his cane, he had sat and listened, with apparently deep interest, to Westgate's speech. But whether the lawyer's eloquence or the face of the plaintiff's wife was the greater attraction, it would have been difficult to discover. For, while his ears appeared to be attuned to the one, his eyes were certainly fixed upon the other, and his gaze was one of distinct admiration.

When Westgate concluded his address and took his seat, Barry turned to the rector and whispered:

"Great speech, that of Phil's, wasn't it?"

"Yes," replied the rector. "From the standpoint of clear logic it was faultless."

"Too bad he couldn't have had twelve men with brains and education to take it in. Trying a case before an ordinary jury is more or less of a farce. Really, you know, the law ought to be so changed that only men of unusual intelligence, men with property interests of their own, could sit on a jury."

The rector smiled. He was well aware of Barry's undemocratic tendencies, and he knew just as well that to argue the point with him would be quite futile. Nevertheless, he said:

"Oh, I don't know! It seems to me that heart and conscience should count for something in the jury box."

"Ah," replied Barry, "there's your mistake. Cases should be decided according to law and logic, not according to sentiment. Take this case, now. Here's a devilish—I beg your pardon!—an extraordinarily handsome woman, of the same general social class as most of the jurors. Plaintiff's wife, you know. She goes to the stand and tells a moving tale of hardship and suffering. Sits there and turns eloquent eyes from

counsel to witness and from witness to jury. Beauty in distress! Stalwart manhood in ruins! How are brains and logic going to win out against such a combination, before a jury made up of clerks and workingmen?"

"So far as my observation has gone," replied the rector, "I'm inclined to think the ordinary jury deals out pretty even-handed justice."

"Not when there's a handsome woman in the case. Look at her now! By Jupiter! she's a beauty!"

Barry's enthusiasm was not unfounded. The plaintiff's wife was in animated conversation with her lawyer during the brief interval preceding his address. Evidently she was pointing out to him some mistake in Westgate's declarations, or fallacy in his logic. The jurors, the lawyers, the spectators in the court-room, were watching her, no less than were Barry Malleson and the Reverend Mr. Farrar. She was worth watching.

"Crude and uncultured, of course," added Barry. "But, take such a face and figure as that, plus clothes and social training—she is already reputed to have brains,—and you would have a social queen. Gad!"

He turned his eyes away, as if to rest them for a moment on some less fascinating object. The clergyman did not seem to consider that his companion's remarks called for any reply from him. People who knew Barry as well as Mr. Farrar did seldom took him very seriously.

The attorney for the plaintiff rose to make the concluding address to the jury. He had not the logical grasp of the case that his opponent had displayed, but he was more plausibly eloquent. He appealed more to the sympathies of the jurors than to their reason. He grew fierce in his denunciation of the greed and heartlessness of corporations in general, and of this corporation in particular. He became dramatic in his vivid description of the accident, and tearfully pathetic in depicting the future that lay before this man with the

crushed body and the clouded mind. He called upon the jurors, as men of intelligence and conscience, to look to it that domineering wealth should not escape its just obligations to one whom it had carelessly crippled and cast aside; on whose home rested to-day the dark shadows of unspeakable pain and distressing poverty.

At the conclusion of his address many men in the court-room, including some of the jurors, wiped furtive tears from their eyes, and all of the women were openly weeping; all save one, the wife of the plaintiff. She did not weep. Her glowing dark eyes were tearless and triumphant. She looked into the sympathetic faces of the jurors and read their verdict there before they, themselves, had considered it. She knew that her long fight for justice on behalf of her crippled husband and herself was approaching its victorious end. Why should she weep?

Then Judge Bosworth began his charge to the jury. He gave a brief history of the case. He dwelt upon some of its more important phases as revealed by the evidence. He laid down the general rules of law governing this class of cases. He passed upon the requests of counsel for instruction to the jury. He said finally:

"Counsel for the defendant company has asked us to charge you that 'under all the evidence in the case the verdict of the jury must be for the defendant.' This is correct, and we so charge you; and, in doing so, we say that, except in the case of a common carrier, the uniform rule is that when recovery is sought on the ground of negligence of the defendant, the burden of proof is on the plaintiff, and in an action against an employer some specific act of negligence must be shown. No defect of any kind was shown in the elevator, nor was there any evidence which would justify a finding that it was unsafe for employees to use. Its falling was not shown to have been due to the breach of any duty owed by the employer to his employees. With

the friction brake on it the engineer could have controlled it, and the only rational conclusion is that, instead of doing so, he carelessly let it drop with resultant consequences to this plaintiff which are not to be visited on the employer. This is one of those regrettable industrial accidents for which, in the present state of our laws, there appears to be no remedy in the way of compensation for injuries received.

"While the plaintiff is not charged with any contributory negligence, and while he has our undoubted sympathy, we cannot permit him to recover against a party that clearly has not been at fault. You will, therefore, in the case of John Bradley against the Malleson Manufacturing Company, render a verdict in favor of the defendant. It will not be necessary for you to leave the box. Mr. Gaylord," to the prothonotary of the court, "you will please take the verdict of the jury."

But before the prothonotary could get to his feet, Juror No. 7, sitting first in the front row, arose and addressed the court.

"Do I understand your Honor to say," he inquired, "that the jury has no right to decide whether or not Mr. Bradley is entitled to damages?"

"No right whatever," replied the judge. "In this case the law governs that question, and the law is exclusively for the court."

"But," persisted the juror, "it seems to me that the jury ought to decide, as a matter of fact, whether this company is responsible for Mr. Bradley's injuries."

The judge responded somewhat tartly:

"We have already explained to you that, in our opinion, the plaintiff has not made out a prima facie case. If we are in error he has his remedy by appeal." And he gathered up the papers lying in front of him as though he had made an end of the matter.

But Juror No. 7 was not yet satisfied.

"It takes time and costs money to appeal," he said.

"If we could give the plaintiff a reasonable verdict now it would probably settle the case for good."

If Judge Bosworth was impatient before, he was plainly vexed now, and he replied with some warmth:

"We cannot argue the matter with you nor permit you to argue it with us. We have considered the case carefully, and have directed a verdict for the defendant. We will not accept any other verdict. Our decision must stand until it is reversed by a higher court."

"I meant no disrespect to your Honor," said Juror No. 7, resuming his seat, "and I will of course obey the direction of the court; but, in my opinion, great injustice is being done."

Some of the jurors nodded as if in affirmance of that opinion. All of them sat, with flushed faces, amazed at the temerity of their fellow-juror, wondering what the court would do or say next. The court-room was so still that the dropping of the proverbial pin could have been heard. But Judge Bosworth did not deign to reply. He turned again, sharply, to the prothonotary:

"Mr. Gaylord," he said, "take the verdict."

The prothonotary did as he was bidden:

"Gentlemen of the jury, hearken unto your verdict as the court has it recorded. In the case wherein John Bradley is plaintiff, and the Malleson Manufacturing Company is defendant, you find for the defendant. And so say you all?"

The jurors nodded their heads. The Bradley case was at an end.

"Mr. Duncan," said the judge to the court crier, "you may adjourn court until ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

The aged crier arose and droned out:

"Hear ye! Hear ye! Hear ye! The several courts are now adjourned till to-morrow morning at ten o'clock."

It was not until then that Barry Malleson fairly recovered his breath. He and the rector had both arisen.

"Did you ever hear of such a thing?" he asked. "The impertinence of the fellow! To stand there and criticize the honorable judge to his face! Why, he should have been fined for contempt of court, and imprisoned as well, without benefit of clergy too—no pun intended."

"And none charged," replied the rector. "I'm not sure, though, but that the man was more than half right."

"Why, Mr. Farrar!" exclaimed Barry; "my dear sir! If juries were permitted to take the law into their own hands, what would become of our republican institutions? Where would be our guarantees of law and order? The next step in advancing civilization, sir, will be the complete abolition of the entire jury system."

"Along with the obsolete form of democratic government, I suppose," laughed the rector.

"I am not prepared at this moment," replied Barry, "to go to that extreme; but incidents of unblushing presumption, such as we have just witnessed, make one feel that some kind of a curb must be put on the lower and less intelligent classes, or they will become actually tyrannical."

In the meantime the judge had left the bench. The court-room audience was shuffling noisily out. The jurors, who had just rendered their enforced verdict, found their hats, and all except No. 7 strolled down the aisle by twos and threes discussing the sudden ending of the case. The lawyer for the plaintiff gathered up his books and papers, thrust them into his green bag, and then stopped to consult with the plaintiff's wife. Westgate and his client strolled across the bar enclosure to where Barry and the rector were standing.

"Congratulations, old boy!" said Barry to the lawyer. "You did a fine piece of work!"

"Oh," replied Westgate carelessly, "the case was easy. The law was all on our side." He turned to

the rector. "We are always glad to see you in court, Mr. Farrar."

"The court-room is an extremely interesting place," replied the clergyman.

"More interesting than profitable, if one is a litigant," remarked Mr. Malleson. "I suppose, when the millennium comes, there will be no more litigation, Mr. Farrar?"

"No," replied the clergyman. "The voice of the lawyer will no longer be heard in the land, and we shall have a thousand years of peace."

Barry laughed, but the others only smiled.

"That's one on me," said Westgate. "Are you going our way, Mr. Farrar? Will you come along with us?"

"No," replied the clergyman, "thank you! I want to stop and speak to Mrs. Bradley. A little consolation might not come amiss. She must be suffering severely from disappointment."

"Good idea!" broke in Barry. "The woman is certainly to be pitied. No doubt she's the victim of bad advice. I've a great mind to stop and talk to her myself, and explain the law to her, and the attitude of our company in the matter. It may be that she's entirely ignorant and innocent."

"Don't fool yourself, Barry," said Westgate. "She's no weakling. I know. She may possibly accept condolence from Mr. Farrar, but I'm mighty certain she won't accept it from you."

"There's no harm in trying, is there?" persisted Barry. "It would be extremely interesting and informing to hear the woman talk."

Mr. Malleson turned to his son.

"You let Mrs. Bradley alone," he said. "When she comes to her senses about this thing, and dismisses her shyster lawyer, we may do something for her; not as a matter of right, but as a matter of grace."

"Certainly!" replied Barry, "as a matter of grace.

That's the only ground on which any of these people are entitled to help from any of us."

In obedience to his father's injunction he refrained from approaching Mrs. Bradley. Nevertheless he cast a longing eye in her direction and then, with apparent reluctance, followed his father and Westgate from the court-room.

But the rector of Christ Church remained. This tragedy in law had stirred him deeply. From his broad, humanitarian point of view, while the letter of the law had doubtless been upheld, justice, at the same time, had been mocked. He had not said so to defendant's counsel, nor to the president of the defendant company. He had not cared to get into a controversy with them. But he realized, as perhaps no other spectator in the court-room had realized, how sharply and bitterly this unexpected termination of her year's struggle for justice had fallen on the soul of the woman who had borne the burden of the fight. His quick sympathy went out to her. The desire to comfort her if possible, to help her if he could, was strong within him.

Not that her disappointment was especially manifest. She did not shrink, nor grow pale, nor weep, when she heard the charge of the court which virtually sentenced her to a life of unrelieved poverty and toil. She did not, even now, as she stood talking quietly with counsel, look like one who had just toppled from the pinnacle of hope to the pit of despair. Yet that she had done so there could be no doubt.

As her lawyer turned away, both the rector and Juror No. 7 approached her. She turned her back on the rector, and held out her hand to the juror, smiling on him as she did so.

"I don't know you by name," she said, "but I want to thank you for having the courage of your convictions. I'm told it's not often a juror dares do what you've done to-day."

The man was a little abashed as he replied:

"Oh, that's all right! I don't mind saying what I think to anybody. I wish I could have done something for you, though. I wish the jury could have got a chance at that case."

"So do I. But the judge couldn't afford to let you get a chance at it. He knew what you'd do with it. His rich friends would have been displeased. It was their money that elected him, wasn't it?"

"Well, I don't know about that. I guess he was elected fair enough. But, to my way of thinking, when it comes to doing justice, as between man and man, or man and corporation, twelve men are better able to decide than one, and if the law's different from that, then the law ought to be changed."

"Oh," she said, "it doesn't matter much about the law, nor about what anybody's idea of justice is; the important thing is that the rich must stay rich, and the poor must stay poor. It's the business of the lawyers and the judges to see that it's done. That's what they're paid for. It would have set a bad example to the poor for my husband to have won his case. Some other poverty-stricken wretch might have tried by law to get a little of the justice that's due him. They've won their point, but maybe they've made a mistake, after all. Maybe Richard Malleson has sowed the wind. I believe he has. Not that John Bradley will ever be able to resent what's been done to him, but I will, and, as God lives, I'll do it!"

The clergyman, standing near by, could not see her face; but her words came distinctly to his ears. Her voice rose slightly toward the end, but it was not so much its pitch as its expression of fierce determination that moved and startled him. The juror, too, seemed to be somewhat awed by the woman's intensity, and waited a moment before answering her. Finally he said:

"I ain't so sure as you seem to be that the rich, and

those in power, are trying to keep the rest of us under their heels; but I am sure that justice hasn't been done in your case, and if things like this keep on happening in our courts, something is going to drop in this country some day."

"I believe you," she replied; "and when it does drop, I pray that the first man it hits will be the one who is responsible for—this."

She turned, with a slight gesture, toward the unobserving and apparently unthinking clod in the wheel-chair. Her face, visible now to the rector, with its glowing eyes and parted lips, was a picture of subdued but vindictive anger.

Apparently the juror thought it time to bring the conversation to an end, for he said:

"Well, I must be going. I just stopped to say I was sorry for you, and to say if I could help you any way I'd be glad to. My name is Samuel Major. I'm a wagon-maker. My shop is around on Mill Street."

He held out his hand to her and she took it.

"Thank you," she said, "for your sympathy and kindness, and for your interference in our behalf. It didn't amount to anything, of course; it couldn't. But it showed where you stood, and that's what we want, nowadays, men who think, and who are not afraid to say what they think. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

He hurried away, but turned back again to ask:

"Are you going to take the case up to a higher court? or haven't you decided about that yet?"

"I have decided," she replied. "I shall not take it up. I'm done with law and lawyers, and trying to get justice through the courts. Hereafter I'll get it in my own way."

It was not until the juror mentioned his name that the clergyman recognized him as an occasional attendant on the services at Christ Church. He had no pew nor sitting; but his children went to the Sunday-

school, and the rector had called once or twice at the house, finding only the mother at home. So, as the man started toward the aisle, the clergyman intercepted him and shook hands with him.

"I, also," he said, "want to thank you for your conscientious courage, and for your sympathy with these disappointed people. I've been waiting to condole with Mrs. Bradley myself, although I am a stranger to her."

"You'll find her pretty bitter."

"So much the more need for sympathy."

"Yes, it won't come amiss. She's been hard hit, and it isn't right."

"I believe you. That's one of the problems that you and I, together with the rest of the American people, have got to thresh out sooner or later: how to right social wrongs without creating social calamities."

"Well, I think you're giving us some pretty good advice along that line. I've been once or twice to hear you preach lately, and it seems to me you're on the right track."

"I hope so. Come again."

"Thank you! I intend to."

The man went on down the aisle, and the rector walked back toward Mrs. Bradley. She had, in the meantime, been busying herself about her husband, buttoning his coat, putting his hat on his head, making him ready for the desolate journey home. The clergyman approached her.

"I am Mr. Farrar," he said, "rector of Christ Church."

"Yes," she replied quietly, "I know who you are."

"I have been deeply stirred by this case of yours. I want to give you my sympathy, and to talk with you about your husband and yourself."

"Thank you! I have no time to talk now. I must hurry home."

"Pardon me! I'll not keep you. But I'll call on you, if I may, at your leisure."

"I shall have no leisure."

"Then at your convenience."

"It will not be convenient."

It was strange that the woman who had so eloquently poured her grievance into the ears of the friendly juror should have become so suddenly taciturn and unapproachable. The clergyman could not understand it. But it was his business, as a servant of Christ, to break down barriers that separated him from human hearts, so he persisted.

"Surely," he said, "you will not refuse to see me. I understand your disappointment. I realize your suffering. I may be able to comfort you, possibly to help you. Give me the opportunity to try."

She straightened up then, and faced him.

"I don't want to be rude to you," she replied. "I have nothing against you. I've heard that you are well-intentioned toward men and women who work. But I have little use for preachers. They are hired by the rich, they associate with the rich, they are under the control of the rich. They have nothing in common with the class to which I belong, therefore they cannot help us. I am sure you can do no good, either to my husband or to me. I'd rather you wouldn't come."

She turned again to her husband and began to tuck in the plaid robe that covered his lap. The clergyman stood, startled and speechless. This was the first time in his life that he had been arraigned in this manner. After a moment, however, he gathered his thoughts sufficiently to say:

"I think you misjudge us, Mrs. Bradley. I know you misjudge me. It is my effort to do the Master's will among all His people, rich or poor, humble or exalted."

"Yes, that's what they all say. But they do dis-

criminate, and I don't see how they can help it, and hold their jobs. No, I'd rather you wouldn't come. I don't want to see you."

"I hope this is not your final answer."

"It is my final answer."

But the tone of her voice was not unkind as she said it, and in her eyes there was no look of hostility.

"Nevertheless," he replied, "I shall not lose sight of you. I shall keep you in mind, and—I shall pray for you."

She laughed a little at that.

"You'd only waste your breath," she said. "John Bradley knows little about prayers, and I care less. If you want to be really kind to us you will simply let us alone and forget us."

"I want to be really kind to you, Mrs. Bradley; therefore I cannot forget you; but I will respect your wish and will not trouble you, unless Providence should put it in my way to render you a service which you will not resent."

She took his proffered hand, but said nothing more to him. And when he had bidden good-bye to the unresponsive paralytic in the wheel-chair, he turned and left the court-room.

A tipstaff came up to help get John Bradley to the street. Through all the excitement of the closing hours of the trial the position of his body had not changed, nor had the expressionless stare of his eyes. There had been no indication in his face that he realized, in any degree, the importance of the litigation of which he was the center, nor its sudden and disastrous termination. Speechless, emotionless, unheeding and unlovely, he had sat the case through from the beginning with apparently no conception of its meaning or its outcome.

The tipstaff rolled the wheel-chair, with its human freight, down the aisle and into the hall, followed by Mary Bradley.

A janitor came into the room to sweep up the litter on the floor, and, as he swept, he hummed a plaintive ditty that had long been favored of him:

"John Jifkins, he to court would go;
Listen to the tale I tell!
His story it was full of woe;
His lawers fought, but the judge said no,
That Jifkins hadn't a ghost of a show,
And it ended there. Ah well!
Heigh-ho!
Jingle the court-house bell."

The janitor finished his song and his task and departed. Silence fell on the big room, and the shadows of the waning day crept in and took, each one, its accustomed place. Darkness came, and, under its cover, ghosts of old and unnumbered tragedies, enacted through the years within the confines of the four gray walls, came out to stride back and forth across the wide spaces, up and down the enclosure for the bar, and in and out among the vacant chairs of the jury box; to ascend even to the sacred precinct of the bench, and stand grimly behind the chair from which white-robed Justice, with her bandaged eyes and well-poised scales, was supposed to listen to the cry of all who sought her aid.

CHAPTER II

AN ACT OF CHARITY

THE rector of Christ Church did keep in mind, as he had said he would, the disappointed litigant in the Bradley case. He thought of her often. The picture of her crippled and mindless husband as he sat in his wheel-chair in the court-room, staring blankly into space, came not infrequently before his eyes. Nor did he, in any service in which he read the prayer "For a Person under Affliction," forget, while reading it, those two, who had in very truth been visited with trouble and distress. But he respected the woman's wish. He did not call upon her, he did not seek, in any way, to cross her path. It is true that he made some inquiry concerning her, and learned something of her condition, of her grievance against society, and of her personal history. But of this last there was not much to learn. She had been a laborer's daughter; she had become a laborer's wife. She had lost her only child by death. She was now supporting her crippled husband and herself by the labor of her hands. She had moved, with limited activities, in a narrow world. It was not an unusual story. The only circumstance that lifted it out of the commonplace was the fact of the woman's exceptional beauty. It was true, also, that she was possessed of unusual mentality, and an education much better than that possessed by the wife of the average day-laborer, and these things set her somewhat apart from the other women of her social class. In all other respects there was nothing to distinguish her from them, many of whom, indeed, worked harder, and suffered more severe privations, than did she.

Yet the rector of Christ Church would not have been able, had he tried, to dismiss her and her affairs from his mind. One reason for this was that the Bradley case had aroused public interest, and had excited general comment.

It had formed the basis for a new attack on the courts. Labor and socialistic organizations had passed resolutions concerning it. Sensational newspapers had criticized sharply the action of Judge Bosworth in giving binding instructions to the jury. Shallow-minded controversialists had argued hotly, pro and con, concerning the powers of the courts under the state and federal constitutions. Indeed the case bade fair to become a *cause celebre*, not only in professional circles, but throughout the entire community. Mary Bradley's face and figure had not before been unknown in the streets of the city. She was too beautiful to pass unnoticed, even in the cheap and modest costume of a laborer's wife. But in these days she seldom went beyond the confines of Factory Hill, the district in which she lived, that she did not become an object of notice and a subject of comment, both on account of her beauty and of her relation to the Bradley case.

Another reason why the woman had not passed out of the rector's mind was that, since the trial, she had been twice to the services at Christ Church. She had occupied an inconspicuous seat, far in the rear, but, looking out over his congregation, his sharp eye had caught sight of her, and her presence there had brought him a peculiar sense of satisfaction. She had, on both occasions, escaped before he had had an opportunity to greet her, and he did not consider that the fact of her presence there warranted any intrusion on her by him at her home.

The Reverend Mr. Farrar was not the only one who had noticed Mrs. Bradley at church. Many in his congregation had noted her presence, and had commented on it. On one occasion one of the church-wardens,

who had stationed himself in the vestibule, spoke to her pleasantly as she passed out; but she barely noticed him, and he did not repeat his effort to extend to her the church's welcome. Barry Malleson was among those who had seen her at church, and who was interested in her presence there. Not that Barry was concerned about her religious welfare, nor in the fact that her attendance added one more to the already large congregations. Religion and the propaganda of the Church had for him, as he himself said, "only an academic interest." He attended the morning services because it was the thing for a gentleman to do; because the members of his family were devout worshipers there; and because the best and most exclusive people in the city, the people with whom he associated, were regular attendants.

It was not only at the church that he saw Mrs. Bradley; he came upon her now and then on the street. And each additional time that he saw her the fact of her remarkable beauty became more deeply impressed upon his not unimpressionable mind. He could not forget her. She appeared to him frequently when she was not within the range of his physical vision. Her countenance, her figure, her bearing and expression, the look in her wonderful eyes, had become familiar to him, though he had seen her only casually, and less than a dozen times. It was not a case of romantic attraction, for, although Barry was five and thirty, unmarried and unattached, the woman had a husband, such as he was, and Barry, despite his weaknesses, was clean-minded and sincere. He had had many affairs of the heart in his time; he had flitted from flower to flower; he had, after a way peculiarly his own, suggested marriage to more than one of the belles of the city, but none of those to whom he had thus spoken had taken him seriously; and from each romantic mishap he had made rapid and complete recovery. Perhaps Ruth Tracy had been the one most desired by

him. She was handsome, brilliant, sympathetic, of aristocratic family, fitted to grace any man's home; moreover she was the superlative choice of his mother and sisters. But, whenever he approached the topic of matrimony, she parried his advances, complimented him on his good looks, his faultless attire, and his manly bearing. She never said anything about his mental capacity. And then, suddenly, along came Phil Westgate, and, out from under his very eyes, captured the prize and bound her in golden chains of betrothal.

So Barry was free, heart-whole, ready for the next romantic adventure. If Mrs. Bradley had also been free and heart-whole things might possibly have been different; but, as it was, he gave strict obedience to his father's injunction, issued in the court-room on a memorable day, and "let Mrs. Bradley alone." For, whatever else he was, Barry Malleson was a gentleman.

The Reverend Robert Farrar was seated at his breakfast-table one September morning, a month after the trial, reading his morning paper. His three young children had already breakfasted, and the two older of them had been bundled off to school. His wife, sitting opposite to him, was still nibbling at her toast and sipping her coffee. In an obscure corner of the newspaper his eye fell upon a notice of the death of John Bradley. He had died from heart-failure, at the age of thirty-eight years. "He will be remembered," the article concluded, "as the unsuccessful litigant in the celebrated case of Bradley vs. The Malleson Manufacturing Company."

"I must go to her!" exclaimed Mr. Farrar, laying down his paper.

"Go to whom?" was the not unnatural inquiry of his wife.

"To Mrs. Bradley. I see here that her husband died yesterday afternoon. I believe his death lifts the bar of her prohibition, and opens the way to her conscience."

"Is she the woman who refused to let you call on her after she had had the lawsuit?"

"Yes, but I believe she will have a different mind toward me now. This last affliction, if it may be called such, should make her not only willing to see me, but should also make her susceptible to religious influence."

Mrs. Farrar said nothing, but the look on her face indicated that it was still her belief, as it had been from the start, that a woman who would refuse to permit Mr. Farrar to call on her for purposes of pious consolation was quite outside the bounds of susceptibility to any religious influence, exerted under any conditions. She had great admiration, not only for her husband's intellectual force, but for his personal charm and persuasive power as well. She loved him, she believed in him, she trusted him implicitly; but she did not fully understand him. He trod in paths where she had neither the learning nor the ability to follow him; neither the mental nor the physical strength to share in the largeness of his thought, or in the intense application of that thought to the problems of his pastoral work. The most that she could do, and that she did faithfully, was to be a good wife and mother, to devote her spare time to the interests of the Church, and to find mild relaxation in the society of those people who, by reason of her birth and breeding, as well as of her position, welcomed her to their exclusive circles.

"I wish," said the clergyman, expressing the continuation of his thought, "that I might make an opportunity for you to call on Mrs. Bradley. I believe that in her present misfortune she might be willing to accept the ministrations of a good woman of the Church."

"Yes, dear. I will call on her if you wish it. Only I don't see how I could possibly have any influence on a woman who doesn't believe in the power of prayer. It seems so shocking to me."

"I know. It is shocking. But I hope we shall find

her now in a better frame of mind. I am told that she is a very superior woman, and I am anxious to get her into the Church. If you could only manage to approach her on some sort of social level. I believe that the trouble with all of us Church people, the reason why we don't reach people of the humbler kind, is that we don't make our social plane broad enough to take them in. We assume too much superiority. They don't like it, and I can't blame them. When we bring ourselves to meeting them on terms of social equality we shall get them to share with us our religious blessings, and I'm afraid not before."

"Yes, dear."

She felt that the conversation was already drifting beyond her easy comprehension, and that the only thing for her to do was to acquiesce. Yet, notwithstanding her respect for her husband's social theories, the depths of which she was never quite able to comprehend, she could not help a feeling of revolt at the idea of associating, on terms of equality, with people of the cruder if not the baser sort, with such a person, for instance, as Mary Bradley, who ignored religion, and who had flouted the rector of Christ Church.

"And you know," added the rector, "she has been twice lately to our morning services."

"I know, but that doesn't necessarily make her congenial. Do you really mean, Robert, that we should treat these people—a person like Mrs. Bradley, for instance,—exactly as our equals?"

"Certainly! Why not? Christ was no respecter of persons."

"I know. And their husbands? And their children the same as our own? Should I, for instance, let Grace and Robbie play freely with the children on the street back of the rectory?"

"Those children are entitled to the benefit of the culture and good breeding of our own, and they can learn these things only by association."

"But, Robert, dear, suppose our children should learn things from them that do not belong to culture and good breeding. As an example, Robbie came home the other day with an awful word, and when I asked him where he had got it, he said he had learned it from the McBreen boy on the back street."

"Then," said the rector, with an air of finality, "you should have seen the McBreen boy, and explained to him the naughtiness of the word, and requested him not to use it."

"So I did, and he replied that he had learned it from his father, and if his father had a right to use it he had, and he'd like to see any stuck-up preacher's wife stop him."

The rector laughed a little, and rose from the table.

"Oh, well," he said, "the principle holds good anyway. But we must apply it with judgment. We can spoil the best of our precepts by putting them into injudicious practice. And you always reach the end of an argument, Alice, by the *ad absurdum* route."

He looked at his watch and added:

"I think I'll go up to Mrs. Bradley's this morning. My afternoon is full, and the sooner the call is made the better."

But when he was ready to start, and had actually gotten to the hall-door, his wife called him back.

"Robert, dear," she said, "don't you think Ruth Tracy could do much better than I on that visit to Mrs. Bradley? I don't want to shirk any of the parish work, really I don't; but she is so much better adapted than I am to—to that sort of thing, you know; and she is so heartily in accord with your views on social equality and all that."

"Well, perhaps; we'll see. Don't let it bother you. Maybe we'll not get the opportunity to visit her anyway. I am only hoping that we shall."

But he could not help thinking, as he went down the steps and out to the street, how much more effectively

his parish work could be done, especially his work among the poor, if only his wife were possessed of greater zeal, of greater ability, of greater sympathy with the unfortunate and with those on whom the hand of adversity had fallen heavily. And, in logical sequence, his thought went on to consider what an ideal helpmate for a clergyman Ruth Tracy would be. She, indeed, had not only intellect and skill, not only the ability to manage successfully the social affairs of a parish, not only a pious zeal for the work of the Church, but also a broad sympathy for those who were in any kind of distress, and a charming personality that drew to her, irresistibly, all classes of people. Yet she was to marry a layman, Philip Westgate the lawyer, a vestryman of Christ Church, active in its business affairs; but a non-communicant, who, apparently, had never been impressed with the necessity of subscribing to the creed, or of identifying himself, religiously, with the Church. It was a comforting thought to the rector, however, that in the event of Miss Tracy's marriage he would not necessarily lose her valued assistance as a helper in the parish work.

Still, it was a pity that she was not to become a minister's wife. And with this thought fresh in his mind, as he turned the corner into Main Street, he ran plump into Westgate himself. The two men were going in the same direction and they walked on together.

"I see," said the rector, "that John Bradley, against whom you obtained a verdict last month, died yesterday. I am going up to call on his widow."

"Indeed!" was the reply. "I hadn't heard of it; but I'm not surprised. I was not aware, though, that the Bradleys were in any way connected with the parish."

"They are not. They are not affiliated with any religious organization, so far as I can learn. That is one reason why I am going up there."

Westgate looked at the rector a little doubtfully, but made no reply.

"I have seen Mrs. Bradley at our services once or twice of late," added the clergyman, "and it occurred to me that it might be an opportune time to tender to her the good offices of the Church. It may also well be that she is in need of material help."

"That's possible. It's unfortunate that she didn't accept Mr. Malleson's offer at the time of the accident."

"What was his offer? I hadn't heard of it."

"I presume not. Few people have. It's popular to exploit the heartlessness of corporations, but there are not many who are willing to mention their deeds of generosity. Why, Mr. Malleson offered to pay all doctor's bills made or to be made in connection with Bradley's injury, and to make them a gift of fifteen hundred dollars besides. I considered that to be a very liberal offer, inasmuch as the company was not legally bound to pay them a penny."

"And Mrs. Bradley rejected it?"

"Yes, she turned it down flat, and took up with Sheldrake—you know what kind of a lawyer he is—and Sheldrake brought suit for twenty-five thousand dollars damages—and lost his case, as I knew he would."

"Why did Mrs. Bradley refuse your proposition?"

"Well, in the first place, because she didn't consider the amount large enough; but principally because we offered it as a gratuity. She would have no gifts. We must acknowledge an obligation, and make our payment on that account, or she would have nothing to do with us. That's the trouble with many of these people; they are too independent. They have no sense of proportion. They don't appreciate their true relation to society. They quarrel with their bread and butter when it comes to them as a benevolence, and they refuse charity on the ground that they should receive help as a matter of right and not as a matter of grace."

"I am not sure but that they are right, Westgate. A man is a man regardless of the accident of birth or

wealth; and society owes to him something besides and better than charity. There is a feeling among the laboring classes that they are not getting their fair share of the wealth which they help to produce; and that, if they did get it, charity, as it is now known, would become obsolete. There would be no occasion for its exercise. I believe that they are more than half justified in that feeling. I can't blame them for refusing to accept as a gift that which they should have as a right. I am becoming convinced that if the Kingdom of Christ is ever to come on this earth it will only be when social and economic equality obtains among all men."

"Oh, that's socialism, Mr. Farrar. That's socialism pure and simple. I haven't time to discuss that subject with you this morning. You see we're here at my office building already. But come up to dinner some evening. Bring Mrs. Farrar with you. Mother is especially fond of Mrs. Farrar—and we'll thresh the thing out. I'm prepared to demolish the doctrines of every socialist from Karl Marx to John Spargo."

"Good! I'll come. I'll bring Mrs. Farrar. I anticipate an evening of real enjoyment."

The two men shook hands and separated. But before the rector had gone two steps he turned and called to Westgate.

"I don't want you to misunderstand me," he said, when they again met, "not even temporarily. While there are many things in the socialist propaganda that appeal to me strongly, I do not swallow it *in toto*. I do not go much farther than the acceptance of the theory of social and economic equality of which I spoke. And there are some doctrines advocated by socialist leaders and writers with which I am entirely at variance."

"How about the theory that the marriage tie should be freely dissolved at the will of the parties?" asked Westgate.

"That theory is abhorrent to me," replied the minister. "I stand squarely with my Church on all matters relating to marriage; as I do on all other matters concerning which the Church has made any pronouncement."

"That's comforting, at least," replied Westgate, smiling. "I suppose, however, that you accept the Marxian theory of surplus values?"

"I believe the principle is sound."

"And the economic interpretation of history?"

"No. I am not ready to assent fully to that doctrine. It approaches too closely to the border of materialism to suit me. It is possible, however, that I do not completely understand it."

"Well, I believe, when we have gone over the whole subject, that we shall find ourselves in accord on many things. It's a fascinating theme, but neither of us has time to discuss it at length this morning. There is something, however, that I've been wanting to say to you for a long while, and it comes in here so exceedingly apropos that I'm greatly tempted to say it now."

"Do so, by all means."

"Thank you! I suppose it's somewhat presumptuous for me, a non-communicant, even to appear to criticize the minister; but your sermons, especially of late, have seemed to some of us to savor of an attack on wealth; and you know that isn't a particularly popular attitude for you to assume toward the congregation to which you preach."

"Not an attack on wealth, Mr. Westgate, but on the prevailing methods of the use and distribution of wealth."

"It amounts to the same thing."

"By no means! I shall try to convince you when we have that discussion. I don't think you understand the real meaning of the gospel which I am trying to preach. It is not a gospel of destruction, but of regeneration. And in my judgment the hearts of the

rich need regenerating as much as do the consciences of the poor."

"And I don't think you understand the real meaning of the suggestion which I am trying to give you. You may call it a warning if you choose. It is not offered by way of criticism or complaint. The point is simply this: that you have a good many rich men in your church, and they give freely toward its support. You cannot afford to antagonize them unnecessarily."

"I know what you mean, and I appreciate the point you make. It is not a new one to me. I have considered it many times. I have thought the thing out carefully and prayerfully, and I have determined to preach the gospel of Christ as I think He would preach it if He were on earth to-day. I can do no less and square myself with my own conscience."

"But a clergyman should be politic as well as conscientious. I remember that the apostles were instructed to be 'wise as serpents' as well as 'harmless as doves.' Well, we can't settle it on the street corner, that's sure. We'll have to broaden our discussion to take in this branch of the subject, and occupy two evenings with it instead of one. So come soon!"

They again separated, but it was Westgate this time who called the clergyman back.

"By the way," he said, "you are going up to see Mrs. Bradley?"

"Yes."

"Well, if you should find her in distress, economical distress, I mean, I am very sure that Mr. Malleson would be glad to contribute something toward her relief—two or three hundred dollars maybe; enough to pay funeral expenses and a little over. He harbors no resentment against her on account of the suit. He lays all that up against Sheldrake. Indeed, if the woman is suffering for necessaries, I should be glad to make a modest contribution myself."

"Thank you! I'll find out. But the impression that

I have of her is that she would be more likely to resent than to accept any gratuity from either Mr. Malleson or you. Nevertheless, I will keep your offer in mind, and I will present it to her if it should appear to be desirable to do so."

"Thank you!"

The rector again turned away, but he did not get to Factory Hill that morning. Before he had gone two blocks from Westgate's office a parishioner came hurrying after him and besought him to go to see a sick girl living in another suburb of the city, a girl who felt that she could not close her eyes to the scenes of earth until she had bared her soul to the rector of Christ Church. So he went to her.

The Reverend Mr. Farrar was not the only one who discovered in the morning paper a notice of John Bradley's death. Barry Malleson came upon it accidentally, as he came upon most other things of any moment, and it at once aroused his deep interest. He was at his desk in the president's office at the factory, where he could be found practically every working day during office hours. His name appeared in the list of officers of the Malleson Manufacturing Company as vice-president. Some one said that it did no harm, and it tickled Barry's vanity. His salary was quite satisfactory. His duties were not accurately defined, although they appeared to consist largely in obeying the president's will, as a matter of fact, and of sustaining the burden of the conduct of the company's affairs as a matter of personal belief. His father would have found it difficult to get along without him. He would have found it impossible to get along without his father. That Barry had his uses there can be no possible doubt. He was replete with suggestion, and that his suggestions were rarely acted upon never deterred nor discouraged him. He had a suggestion to make this morning in connection with John Bradley's death. It came into his mind simultaneously with the reading of

the death notice. He turned toward the man sitting at the desk across the room.

"Father," he said, "the time has come when we should do something for Mrs. Bradley."

The president of the Malleson Manufacturing Company did not look up from the work on which he was engaged, but he replied with a question:

"How's that?"

"Her husband died yesterday."

"Whose husband?"

"Mrs. Bradley's. The man against whom we won the suit. I shouldn't wonder if she might be financially embarrassed. It would be a fine opportunity to show that there is at least one corporation that has a soul."

The president was looking up from his papers now; hard-eyed, square-jawed, smooth-shaven, immaculate.

"We have no right to give away our stockholders' money," he said shortly.

"I know, father; but this is a case where we can afford to overstep the limits a little and be generous. Personally, and as vice-president of the company, I would recommend that a small gratuity be given to the woman on account of her husband's death. We have done as much when other employees have died."

"But the others did not bring suit against us."

"Well, she has no suit pending against us now. She refused to let Sheldrake take the case up to a higher court, or even to move for a new trial. I understand she told him she never wanted to see his face again. And Westgate said the other day that it was too late for her to do anything more, even if she should change her mind about it."

The president mused for a moment before replying. Finally he said:

"As the woman seems to have come to her senses, and is probably in need, I suppose we might do as we have done in other cases. I never laid the blame for

the suit on her, anyway. It was that ambulance-chaser of a lawyer that put her up to it."

"That's very true, father. What shall we give her?"

"Let's see! What did we give McAndrew's widow when he died?"

"Two hundred and fifty dollars. I know because I took the check to her myself, and she was so grateful she tried to kiss me. Gad!"

Barry felt cold shivers running over him now as he recalled his narrow escape from the proposed osculatory embrace of the unattractive and slatternly but grateful widow of the deceased workingman.

Mr. Malleson's eyes twinkled mischievously.

"I remember the circumstance," he said, and added: "Perhaps Mrs. Bradley will be similarly grateful."

Barry leaned back in his chair and thrust his hands into his pockets.

"Well," he said, contemplatively, and in all seriousness, "I would think twice before declining a favor of that kind from Mrs. Bradley. She's a remarkably attractive woman."

The president did not dwell further on the subject. It may have been because of its incongruity; it may have been because of some undefined feeling of foreboding that crossed his mind at that moment.

"You may ask Page," he said, "to draw her a check for two hundred and fifty dollars. Tell him to run it through the expense account, and to put in the voucher a statement that it is received by Mrs. Bradley as a gratuity from this company."

"Yes, sir."

Barry rose with unusual alacrity, but before he reached the door his father called to him:

"A—Barry! Suppose you tell Page to make that four hundred instead of two fifty. There have been special hardships in this case, and the woman is undoubtedly capable of using the money judiciously."

"Yes, father. I, myself, was just about to recommend four hundred dollars. I think she can put the money to good use."

A little later Barry returned to the president's room with Page, the treasurer, who brought with him a check and a voucher, both of which he handed to Mr. Malleson. The president examined the voucher carefully, signed the check, and handed the papers back to Page.

"Shall I send a special messenger up with them?" asked the treasurer.

"I'll take them to her myself," said Barry promptly.

Page turned to him with a smile.

"Hunting for a repetition of that experience with the Widow McAndrew, are you?" he asked.

Barry's experience with the Widow McAndrew was one of the standing jokes among the office force of the company.

"Don't mention it," said Barry. "It gives me a chill now to think of it. You know I'm rather fastidious, Page, rather fastidious. And the woman wasn't what you might call personally neat, and she'd been crying, and her hair wasn't combed, and she certainly weighed not less than two hundred—no discoverable waist-line, you know; and when I saw her bearing down on me——"

The two men passed out of the room and closed the door behind them, Barry continuing with the relation of his oft-repeated story of the Widow McAndrew's gratitude.

In the meantime the president of the company had plunged again into the work on his desk. But when the door closed on Barry and Page he looked up, laid down his pen, rose and walked over to one of the windows and stood for many minutes looking out into the plaza on which his factory buildings fronted, and up the narrow street that led toward the heart of the city.

CHAPTER III

IN THE PRESENCE OF DEATH

It was not until the afternoon of the day that he met Westgate on the street that the Reverend Mr. Farrar was able to go to Factory Hill. It was a suburban residence district, tenanted mostly by day-laborers and their families. It lay about two miles from the center of the city, on an elevated plateau overlooking the plant of the Malleson Manufacturing Company. The houses in the neighborhood were all small and unpretentious, and some of them were shabby and ill-kept. But the house that Mary Bradley occupied, small as it was, gave evidence of being well cared for by its tenant. The rector had no difficulty in finding it. Every one about there knew where Mrs. Bradley lived. He knocked at the crape-decorated door, and the mistress of the house, herself, opened it. When she saw who was standing there her face clouded. A visit from a clergyman was neither expected nor desired. But she felt that she could not afford to be remiss in hospitality, even to an unwelcome guest. So she invited him to come in. It was the living-room that he entered. From behind a closed door to the rear subdued sounds proceeded as though some one were working in the kitchen. Beyond another door, half opened, the rector caught a glimpse of a prone human body, covered over with a sheet. Otherwise Mary Bradley was alone. She made no pretense of being glad to see her visitor, but she set a chair for him, and waited until he should disclose his errand. And, now that he was here, he was at a loss to know just what he should say. He felt that this woman would resent any formal expres-

sion of sympathy, any meaningless platitudes, any pious attempt at consolation. So he compromised with his true errand by inquiring into the particulars of John Bradley's death. There was not much for her to tell. He had failed, steadily, since the time of the trial. On the afternoon before, his heart had refused to perform its proper function, and all was soon over. She told it very briefly and concisely.

"And the funeral, Mrs. Bradley?"

"It will be to-morrow afternoon."

The rector thought it possible that she might ask him to come and read at least a prayer; but she made no suggestion of the kind. He attempted to draw her into conversation concerning herself, but she was reticent. She was not discourteous, but she was totally unresponsive. Finally, failing to approach the subject by degrees, he said to her abruptly:

"I owe you an apology for coming here after you had declined to receive me; but I felt that, under changed conditions, a visit from me might not be wholly unwelcome. So I have run the risk of trespassing on your forbearance."

She made no reply, and he went on:

"I have thought very often of you, and," with a glance in the direction of the half-opened door, "of your unfortunate husband. I have many times wanted to give you such comfort as I could, such consolation as the Church offers to those in distress."

"Thank you!" she replied; "but I have stood in no particular need of comfort; and I'm very sure the Church has nothing to offer me, in the way of consolation, that would be of the slightest benefit to me."

This was not very encouraging, but the rector of Christ Church was not easily dismayed.

"Even so," he said, "you might still wish, or might be willing, to have me, as a minister, take part in the funeral service. I should esteem it a privilege to do that, with your permission."

"No," she replied, "I can't permit it. I appreciate your offer, but I don't care to have the Church interested in my husband's funeral."

"Why not, Mrs. Bradley?"

She looked at him steadily for a moment before replying. Then she answered his question by asking another.

"What did the Church ever do for John Bradley in his lifetime that it should concern itself now about the burial of his body?"

He, too, paused for a moment before replying. Then he said:

"The Church did all for John Bradley that he would permit her to do. Her doors were always open to him. She urged him, in countless ways, to partake of the consolations of religion under her auspices and protection. I, as a minister of Christ, may have been remiss in the performance of my duty; doubtless I have been, but the Church has never been derelict in the performance of hers, and she remains always the same."

She hastened to defend him against himself.

"You haven't been remiss," she declared. "You've done what you've considered your duty as far as you've been permitted to do it. I've nothing against you. You're better than your Church. I've heard other people say that. I've been once or twice to hear you preach. I may go again. I like what you say. But I've no use for the Church. I judge the Church by the people who support it and manage it. And I don't care for the people who support and manage your church and sit in most of the pews."

"Why not, Mrs. Bradley?"

"Because they are rich and look down on us. They hire us and pay us our wages; they dole out a little charity when we are in hard luck, but they would consider it a disgrace to associate with us on any kind of terms of equality. They don't regard us as human beings with the same right that they have to live com-

fortably and be happy. If their religion teaches them that, if their Church permits it, I don't want any of their religion, nor anything to do with their Church."

If he had succeeded in nothing else, he had at least succeeded in drawing her out, and in leading her to give expression to her grievance. But she had attacked the Church in a vulnerable spot, and it was his duty as a priest to defend the institution and its people.

"I believe," he said, "that you unwittingly do the men and women of Christ Church an injustice. There are many of them who are rich, it is true. But there are many of these who have warm hearts and a keen sense of human justice. You know there are such persons as Christian capitalists."

"Yes, I know. There," pointing to the body in the next room, "lies one of their victims. John Bradley was killed by Christian capitalists."

"Mrs. Bradley, you are severe and unjust."

"Am I? Let me tell you." She did not resent his reproof. She was perfectly calm; she was even smiling. But she wanted now to be heard. "Two years ago my husband worked in the Brookside factory, two miles down the river. You know the place. The company rented all the houses to its men. We had to take what they gave us; a miserable, dilapidated shack on the edge of a stagnant pond. My little girl took sick and pined away and the doctor said we ought not to keep her in such a place. When we thought she would die my husband went to the manager of the mills —he's a shining light in the Church; not your church, but that doesn't matter—and begged him, for the sake of the child, to give us a better house to live in. He told my husband that if he was not satisfied with the house the company had provided for him he was at liberty to quit his job; that his place could be filled in three hours' time. Well, John did quit his job, and found work here at the Malleson. But it was too late —to save—my baby's life."

She paused, and a mist came over her eyes. For a moment the imperishable mother-love dominated her soul and silenced her tongue.

"That was very sad," said the rector.

She repeated his words. "That was very sad." After a moment she continued: "They gave John a good enough place at the Malleson, as good wages as any skilled workman gets; they drove him and bullied him as they do all of his kind—you know they are mere slaves, these factory workmen—and one day they put him into a cage, and some one there dropped him into a pit. When they took him out—well, he might better have been dead. You know; you saw him. Mr. Malleson sent a messenger to me with a paltry sum. I must accept it, not as compensation, but as a gift. And I must release all claims for damages. Naturally, I refused. I employed an attorney to bring suit and get what was justly due us. Mr. Malleson, he's a pillar in your church, fought our claim with every weapon at his command. Mr. Westgate, his lawyer, a member of your vestry, set all of his wits to work to deprive us of our rights. But we would have won out against all of them if it hadn't been that the judge on the bench, also a member, I believe, of your vestry, refused at the last minute to let the jury pass upon the case, and decided it himself, in favor of the Mallesons. I'm not a lawyer; I don't know how it was done; perhaps you do. I only know that it was cruel and horribly unjust. Mr. Farrar, do you wonder that with these shining examples of your religion before me, and with two dead victims of your Christian capitalists to mourn over, I am not falling over myself in my haste to get into your Church?"

She turned her piercing eyes away from the minister's face, to let them rest for a moment on the rigid, sheet-covered figure lying in the next room. Her cheeks were aglow, her breast was heaving, she had spoken from the fulness of a bitter heart. And the

rector of Christ Church could not answer her. She used a kind of concrete logic that he was not prepared at that moment to refute. The best he could do was to try to postpone the issue.

"I shall not argue this out with you to-day," he said. "I feel that you are entirely wrong in your estimate of religion and the Church, and some day, when the severity of your affliction has passed, I want to come again and talk with you. In the meantime will you not reconsider your refusal to recognize the Church in the matter of the burial of your husband?"

"Why should I reconsider it? The Church has never recognized me. It never recognized John Bradley. Doling out charity is not recognition; inviting the poor to come and sit in the rear pews of your church is not recognition. Oh, I tell you, Mr. Farrar, I don't want charity from your Church people, nor sympathy, nor a chance to crowd in to your services; what I want is plain human justice, with a right to live comfortably and be decent and happy. And when they begin to give that to me, I'll begin to have some regard for their Church."

It was entirely plain to the rector that he could accomplish no religious purpose with this woman at this time, and he rose to go.

"I am sorry," he said, "for I really wanted to help you. I hope you believe that at any rate."

She rose in her turn. "I believe it," she said.

"And that my Master in heaven has compassion on you."

"I'll believe that when He repudiates the conduct toward me of most of His followers here."

It was her parting shot. He did not reply to it, but he held out his hand to bid her good-bye. She took it with no reluctance.

"Please understand," she said, "that my grievance is not against you personally. I believe you are good and conscientious."

"Thank you!"

The hum of an automobile came in to them from the street. The car had evidently stopped in front of Mrs. Bradley's premises. The next minute a knock was heard at her door. She went and opened it. Barry Malleson stood there, smiling.

"Mrs. Bradley, I believe?" he said.

"I am Mrs. Bradley."

"And I am Barry Malleson, vice-president of the Malleson Manufacturing Company."

"Yes?"

She stood in the doorway and he stood on the step. The door opened directly into the sitting-room where the Reverend Mr. Farrar was standing, ready to leave the house. Mrs. Bradley made no move, nor did she invite the vice-president of the Malleson Manufacturing Company to enter. He stood for a moment, expectantly, and then asked:

"May I come in, Mrs. Bradley? I am here on an important errand."

"Certainly!" she moved aside, and he entered. His eyes fell upon the rector.

"Why, Farrar!" he exclaimed, "this is certainly a surprise; I may say a most agreeable surprise."

"Thank you!" replied the minister. "I have been making a call of condolence on Mrs. Bradley. I am just going."

"Don't go on my account. In fact I'd rather you would stay. I want you to hear what a soulless corporation is going to do for a destitute widow."

It occurred to the rector that he had forgotten to inquire concerning Mrs. Bradley's physical needs, or to sound her on Westgate's generous proposition. It was evident that Barry was about to relieve him so far as any tender of charity was concerned; but he had no mind to stay and hear the vice-president of the Malleson Manufacturing Company blunder tactlessly through an offer that was certain to be resented and refused.

"Thank you!" he said, "but I have important matters to attend to in the city, and, with Mrs. Bradley's permission, I will go."

She had stood there listening, a suspicion of a smile shaping itself on the full and perfectly curved lips, a peculiar gleam in her dark eyes over which the lids were now partly drooping. She turned to the rector.

"I'd rather you would stay," she said. "I, also, want you to hear what this gentleman has to say."

"If you wish it, certainly!" He placed a chair for her, and they all seated themselves.

"That's very kind of you, Farrar, I'm sure," said Barry. He removed his gloves, and drew a long envelope from an inner pocket of his coat. Holding the envelope in his hand he continued:

"I have here, Mrs. Bradley, an evidence of the generosity and good will toward you of the Malleson Manufacturing Company of which I have the honor to be vice-president. The company recognizes the fact that at the time of the injuries which resulted in his death, your husband was in the employ of our company, and that through no fault of ours, and I presume I may safely say, through no fault of his, the accident happened which ——"

Barry suddenly stopped. He had caught sight, for the first time, of the sheeted and recumbent figure in the adjoining room. From a child he had had an unreasoning fear of dead bodies, and a dread of all the physical conditions and changes which the passing of life implies. The vision of death which confronted him stopped his flow of speech, and sent to the roots of his hair that chilly creepiness that strikes into the flesh when things dreaded and feared are suddenly seen. His wide eyes were fixed on the repellent object in the next room, and it was apparent that he was powerless to turn them away, for he said to the rector without looking at him:

"A—Farrar, would you mind closing that door?"

But the widow herself arose and went to the door and closed it tightly. When she resumed her seat, the smile on her lips was a trifle more pronounced, and the strange light in her eyes glimmered more noticeably.

"You know," said Barry, "a dead body always gets on my nerves, whether it's a horse or a dog or a man. I can't abide the sight of any of them. Well, as I was saying when we were interrupted—let me see! what was I saying?"

"You were speaking," said the widow, "of the generosity of your company."

"Yes," continued Barry, "the—the generosity of my company." He paused again. The untoward incident seemed to have quite broken the continuity of his thought.

"You know, Mrs. Bradley," he went on after a moment, "the company doesn't owe you anything."

"No," she replied, "the obligation is quite on the other side. I owe your company something which I shall some day try to repay—with interest."

Witless and unseeing, he blundered on: "Don't mention it, my good woman. Our company bears no resentment. In fact we have decided, on my recommendation as vice-president, to treat you as generously as we do widows of our employees with whom we have had no quarrel."

"And who have not imagined that they had rights which your company was bound to respect," said the widow.

"Exactly," replied Barry. "Who have not harassed us with ridiculous lawsuits, which they could never hope to win."

"I trust," said the widow, "that you will pardon me for that presumption. I didn't know, really, how ridiculous and unreasonable my lawsuit was until the judge informed me from the bench."

"No, I suppose not. But when you learned, by judicial pronouncement, in what a false position you had

been placed, you discharged your lawyer and dropped the case. That was very wise and proper. And, in view of that fact, we have decided to be especially liberal toward you. We—we have usually paid to—to ——"

Whether his nerves had been unstrung by the sight of the death chamber, or whether his senses were being dulled by the fascination of magnetic eyes, of perfect, parted lips disclosing white and even teeth, of a feminine charm which appealed to him irresistibly; whatever may have been the cause, he had lost his easy loquacity and was stumbling along in a manner most unusual for him.

"We have generally paid," he repeated, "to widows of—of ——"

"Victims," she suggested.

"Yes; of victims of—of their own carelessness and lack of brains,—always as a gift—a gift pure and simple, you know—the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars."

"I understand," she said. "A pure and simple gift."

"Exactly."

"And a very munificent gift, considering the low social grade and primitive habits and general unworthiness of those who usually receive it." Stupid that he was, or stupefied, he did not come within a thousand miles of piercing the thin veil of her sarcasm.

"Very true," he replied. "But we recognize the fact that there have been peculiar hardships surrounding your case, and we desire to treat—you with still greater munificence."

"How extremely kind and considerate to an unfortunate victim of—circumstances."

"Yes; it is our purpose to be kind and considerate. Therefore we have decided—and as vice-president of the company I recommended the action—we have decided to make you a gift of four hundred dollars."

She lifted her hands as if in delighted astonishment.

"How extraordinary!" she exclaimed. "You overwhelm me by your liberality. Are you quite sure it won't interfere with paying dividends, or salaries, or anything like that?"

"Not—not at all, Mrs. Bradley." But he looked, for the first time during the interview, a bit uncertain, as if he had a dim sense of something, somewhere, not being exactly right.

During all this time the rector had sat without opening his lips. There had been no occasion for him to speak. With ever-growing astonishment he had watched Barry paving his own path to sure disaster. With ever-growing apprehension he had watched the rising tide of indignation in the woman's breast. Could it be possible that the fellow sitting there was so dim of vision, so witless in intellect, that he could not see the gathering thunder-clouds in her face, the gleam of lightning in her half-veiled eyes; could not realize that a storm, the fury of which would be terrible beyond belief, was about to break on his unprotected head? But the rector of Christ Church knew what was coming, if Barry did not, and he knew that the moment for the cataclysm had about arrived. He moved uneasily in his chair, and his movement attracted the widow's attention. She turned her eyes on him.

"We are keeping you," she said, "without cause. You need not wait any longer. I know what the situation is, and I can handle it without help. Thank you for staying as long as you have."

She rose and held out her hand to him. He took it, but he said:

"I can stay still longer if ——"

She interrupted him:

"It is not at all necessary. Indeed, I would prefer that you should go now."

It was plain to the rector that she did not care to have him witness her outburst of wrath when it should come. Yet he was not quite satisfied to go and leave

Barry alone with her, unsuspecting and unprotected. It seemed a bit cowardly on his part, much as he might dread to see the hurricane. He half hoped that Barry would say something that would make it necessary for him to remain. But Barry said nothing of the kind. He simply shook hands and remarked that he would doubtless overtake the minister on the way back, and added that his errand was about done anyway, with the exception of handing Mrs. Bradley the check and getting her signature to the voucher, and he was sure that that could be done without ministerial help. Indeed, in his own mind, he was rather pleased than otherwise at the prospect of being alone for a few minutes with this remarkable woman, even with the stark body of her dead husband lying grimly in the next room.

So the Reverend Mr. Farrar went his way. The door closed behind him, and Mrs. Bradley and Barry turned back into the room, but they did not resume their seats. He lifted the flap of the envelope which he still held in his hand, and drew forth a check and a voucher.

"If you will kindly sign this receipt," he said, "I will hand you the check. I brought my fountain pen with me. I didn't know how you might be fixed here for writing materials."

"That was very thoughtful of you," she remarked.

She took the check and looked at it carefully.

"And is this," she asked, "your father's signature?"

"Yes. I sign checks only in his absence."

"And—might I keep this as a souvenir? He is such a great and good man."

"Why, you have to give up the check, you know, when you get your money."

"Indeed! How unfortunate!"

She took the voucher and examined it in its turn.

"And do I sign this?" she asked.

"Yes, if you please."

"Oh! I see," still looking at the paper, "that I receive the four hundred dollars as a gift."

"Yes, purely as a gift."

"Ah! Couldn't you put in somewhere how undeserving I am of it, and how grateful I am to get it?"

"Why, that's not necessary, Mrs. Bradley. We—we take all those things for granted, you know."

"Oh! And this says also that I release all claim for damages."

"Yes. We thought it best to put that in. You never can tell what may happen."

"I see! Don't you think that it ought also to say that I acknowledge my unworthiness and inferiority, and yield up my self-respect, and recognize my own deplorable social condition? Don't you?"

He did not reply. It was dawning on him at last that she had been trying to pierce him with shafts of ridicule. Now her manner was changing from gentle raillery into that of biting and open sarcasm. She threw the papers down on the table in front of him and backed away. She stood erect and dignified. Her eyes, widely open now, were luminous with wrath. Her lips were parted still, but not in smiles. The gleam of her white teeth was ominous. She was like a splendid leopard, not crouching, but ready to seize upon her prey. It would seem that only a fool could have been unaware of his peril. Yet Barry Malleson stood there, vaguely wondering why she should have grown suddenly sarcastic, and whether it was possible that she was about, after all, to decline the gratuity that he had offered to her. Of the fierce wrath that lay back of her piercing eyes, ready to flash in hot words from her tongue, he had no conception. Perhaps it was well that he had none. Heaven is often kind, in that way, to the mentally unfortunate.

But she was not quite ready for the leap. There was one thing to be settled first.

"Richard Malleson," she said, "has sent you with a

message to me. Will you, in turn, kindly take a message from me to Richard Malleson?"

"With—with pleasure, Mrs. Bradley." But he spoke hesitatingly. There was a ring in her voice, a certain rising inflection that gave him a sense of uneasiness. It seemed to sound a vague alarm.

"Thank you! It is very appropriate to send the message by you, because, I believe, you are his son."

"Very true. I am his son."

His eyes were fixed on hers in open, frank, involuntary admiration. She saw his soul as plainly as though it had lain mapped and lettered before her.

"You—are—his son," she repeated slowly.

The lids again half veiled her eyes. The hard lines on her lips relaxed. She put her hand up against her heart as though she were stifled by some sudden and overwhelming emotion. A chair stood by her and she dropped into it and began to pass her fingers absentmindedly across her forehead.

Barry was alarmed. He had noticed the quickened breathing, and the sudden pallor that had come into her face, and he feared that she was ill.

"Shall I call some one?" he said.

"Thank you, no. It was just a passing weakness. I've been on my feet a good deal and lost a good deal of sleep lately. Won't you please be seated?"

"No, I guess not. I won't trespass any longer on your time and strength. If you'll sign this voucher I'll go."

"Please be seated for a moment. There's something I want to tell you."

If there was any longer any wrath in her soul, her face did not show it, her voice did not indicate it. She looked up at him appealingly, with big and tender eyes. He could no more have refused her invitation to be seated than he could have refused to draw his next breath.

"It is very kind of you—and of your father—to

offer me the money," she said, "but, really, I can't accept it."

"Oh, but you must accept it, Mrs. Bradley. Why won't you take it?"

"Well, we are not in immediate need."

"That's all right; you can lay it away."

"And I am opposed, on principle, to accepting charity."

"Then we won't call it charity."

"Or gifts from those who are better off than I am. I don't believe there should be any rich people to make gifts, nor any poor people to receive them. I think the wealth of the world should be more evenly distributed."

"Oh, but you're wrong there, Mrs. Bradley. I think I can convince you ——"

"I'm too tired to be convinced to-day, Mr. Malleson."

"Pardon me! I'll come again later on and we'll talk it over."

"As you wish."

"Say in the course of a week or two?"

"If you desire."

She rose, as if to conclude the interview, and took the check and voucher from the table and handed them to him.

"Can't I prevail on you," he said, "to accept this gift?"

"Not to-day, Mr. Malleson."

"When I come again?"

"Possibly. It is said that a woman is never twice of the same mind."

"Then I shall certainly come."

He was looking at her still with undisguised and ever-increasing admiration. Not that he was conscious of it. It was purely involuntary. He would not knowingly have sought, in this way, to impress or embarrass a woman whose husband's dead body was lying just

back of the first closed door. For he was a gentleman, and had a gentleman's sense of the proprieties. But he was utterly powerless to hide the impression that the woman's beauty was making on him. Moreover it was a versatile beauty. In the brief space occupied by his visit he had seen its character diametrically change. From the strong, scornful, splendid type maintained during the greater part of his interview with her, it had been transformed into the tender, clinging, trusting variety that with many men is still more alluring. But, whatever its character, it held him irresistibly under its spell. He moved backward to the outer door, his gaze still fastened on the woman's face. She gave him her hand at parting. It was a warm, confident, lingering hand-clasp, attuned to the look in her eyes, to the modulation of her voice, to the general friendliness of her manner. It was not the art of coquetry. It was as much deeper and more subtle than that as the sea is deeper and more subtle than the shallow pool. A woman does not play the coquette while a sheet-covered thing that had been her husband lies ghastly still and gruesome in an adjoining room.

But when she heard the humming of the starting car, and knew that her recent visitor was well out of sight and hearing, she resumed her seat, locked her hands above her head, and permitted her fine lips to curve in a smile that was neither gentle nor tender, nor wholly void of guile.

The door from the kitchen was opened and a little old woman with a deeply wrinkled face thrust her head into the room.

"Has everybody gone, Mary?" she asked.

"Yes, mother."

"The first man that come was a preacher, wasn't he?"

"Yes, mother."

"Is he goin' to hold the funeral?"

"No."

"Why ain't he?"
"Because I don't choose to have him."
"Was the next man that come a preacher, too?"
"No, mother."
"Who was he?"
"He was Richard Malleson's—fool."

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW MOON

WHEN Barry Malleson left the house of Mrs. Bradley he left it with his head in a rose-cloud. The woman had fascinated him. Plainly and cheaply garbed as he had seen her, plain and cheap as her environment was, devoid, as she must be, of all social standing and of all the social graces, she had, nevertheless, fascinated him. Not that he permitted himself, under the circumstances, to think of making love to her; that would have been incongruous and inexcusable. But she had surrounded him with an atmosphere pervaded and enriched by her own personality, and from that atmosphere he could not, nor did he try to, escape.

He did not overtake the Reverend Mr. Farrar on his way back to the city, but he did overtake Miss Chichester. She was walking along hurriedly in an unattractive suburb; she was alone, and dusk was falling, and the only decent thing for him to do was to pull up to the curb and ask her to ride into the city. She was not loath to accept his invitation. It pleased her, not alone because the acceptance of it would help her on her way, but because also it would give her, for a brief time, the exclusive companionship of Barry Malleson. There was no just reason why Miss Chichester should not desire the companionship of Barry, nor why she was not entitled to it. They had known each other from childhood. She was a member of his social set; she belonged to the church which he attended; she was not far from his own age; she was fairly prepossessing in appearance; and she was, so far as any romantic connection was concerned, entirely unattached. More-

over, she admired Barry. Perhaps Barry did not know it, but if he did not it was no fault of Miss Chichester's. While maidenly modesty would not permit her to make open love to him, there are a thousand ways in which a young woman may manifest her preference for a man with the utmost propriety. Miss Chichester exercised all of them. But, so far, they had been without avail. Easily impressed as Barry was with feminine charms, he had not been impressed with those of Miss Chichester. Therefore he had been unresponsive. Not that he was entirely unaware of her preference for him —dull as he may have been, he could not have failed to understand something of that—but he simply ignored it. The strenuousness of his duties as vice-president of the Malleson Manufacturing Company left him no time to bestow on a love affair in which he was not especially interested. It was, therefore, with no great amount of enthusiasm that he asked Miss Chichester to ride with him this day. Besides, he had something to think about, and he would have preferred to be alone. But he handed her into his car with as much courtesy as though she had been his wife or his sweetheart.

"You're a long way from home, Jane?" he said, inquiringly.

"Yes," she replied, "I've been down on the south side to visit a poor family in which the guild is interested, and it got late before I realized it. I was hurrying along to get out of this section of the city before dark. It was so good of you to pick me up."

"It's a pleasure to have the opportunity."

"Thank you! Now that I've told you where I've been, it's only fair that you should tell me where you've been. Let's exchange confidences."

"By all means! I've been up to Factory Hill to call on a widow."

"Mr. Pickwick was advised to beware of widows."

"Well, I'm not Mr. Pickwick, and, besides, this one isn't dangerous."

"But is she fascinating, Barry? You know widows are usually described as fascinating."

"Fascinating! Well, now, why do you want to know?"

"Oh, just to find out if you were making love to her."

"Making love to her! Good Lord! With her dead husband lying in the next room!"

"Oh, Barry!"

"If he'd been a live one I might have done it. She was handsome enough to provoke any man into it. But a dead one! Deliver me from dead husbands!"

"That's awfully interesting—and gruesome. Tell me about it, do!"

So Barry told her about his errand to Mrs. Bradley, the purport of it and the result of it. They were rolling up the Main Street of the city. Miss Chichester was not so absorbed in Barry's story that she failed to bow and smile to people on the pavement whom she knew. It was something to be seen at dusk, alone with Barry Malleson, in his car.

"And are you going again to see her, and urge her to take the money?" inquired Miss Chichester when Barry had completed the account of his visit.

"Sure! I'm going again."

"Let me go with you."

"Eh? You go with me? What for?"

"Oh, just to see how such a remarkable woman acts and talks."

"I—I'm afraid I couldn't do as much with her if you were present."

"I'd help you. I'd tell her it was her duty to take the money."

"She doesn't like to be dictated to."

"Then I'd plead with her to take it."

"I—I think I could do better with her alone."

"Barry Malleson, I believe you're on the verge of falling in love with that woman. That's why you don't want me to go."

"Preposterous!"

"Then take me along."

"All right! You may go."

Barry knew that she would have her own way about it eventually, and that he might as well yield first as last.

They had left Main Street and were bowling along up the avenue toward Fountain Park, the exclusive residence district in which they both lived. It was a very mild and beautiful September evening. The balmy air, the shadowy twilight, the moving car, the overhanging trees, were all suggestive of romance. And Miss Chichester was not averse to romance—under proper auspices.

"I think," she said, "that I caught a glimpse of the new moon just beyond the tower of Christ Church as we turned the corner. Did you see it, Barry?"

"No." Barry did not intend to be abrupt, but his mind was occupied just then by the vision of another woman's face.

"Don't you want to look at it?" she asked. "It must be back of us somewhere. We're far enough up the hill now to see it plainly."

"If I turn around I'll have to stop the car."

"Then stop it. It's worth while."

Barry stopped the car and started to turn his head.

"Don't look yet!" exclaimed Miss Chichester. "Over which shoulder must you see it in order to have good luck?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Neither do I. I'll tell you what we'll do, Barry. You look at it over your right shoulder, and I'll look at it over my left; then one of us two will have good luck anyway. It really doesn't matter which one."

"All right!"

Miss Chichester turned her head slowly to the left, while Barry turned his slowly to the right, and so they faced each other. Now, when a susceptible young

man, and a like-minded young woman, sitting side by side in a car, in the gloaming, turn toward each other to look over their respective shoulders at a new moon, the tender light of which falls on their upturned faces, the situation becomes such that Cupid is more than likely to kick up his pudgy heels in glee. But on this occasion he never moved a muscle. It was Barry's fault. He simply did not appreciate his privileges and opportunities. In the most matter-of-fact way he turned back, after gazing for a moment on the glimmering crescent, restored the power to his car, and as it shot ahead he quietly remarked:

"I wonder if the moon is really made of green cheese."

"Oh, Barry!" said Miss Chichester. "You impossible man!"

The funeral of John Bradley was conducted in accordance with the will of his widow. There was no clergyman there. Nor did any one read the service for the burial of the dead as authorized by any Church. Religion had absolutely no part in this final chapter of the story of a workingman's life and death. It was Sunday afternoon, the dead man's fellow-workmen were free to come, and they gathered in large numbers to pay their tribute to his memory. But this was not the only purpose of their coming. They desired also by their presence to manifest their sympathy with his widow, to emphasize their disapproval of the treatment he had received from his corporate employer, and from the court that had sent him away empty handed from the only tribunal that was supposed to do justice between man and man. There were few toilers in the city who had not heard of the misfortunes of the man now dead, and few who did not believe him to have been a victim of corporate greed and of a gross miscarriage of justice.

It was largely in demonstration of their belief that

they came to attend the funeral. One by one they passed by his coffin, men of his own walk in life, and looked down on his dead face. They were sober, sympathetic and silent as they looked. Some of them, who had known him well in his lifetime, were moved to tears. Not that he had been a leader among them, nor that he had been a favórite with them, nor that they had respected or cared more for him than they had for a hundred others who worked nine hours a day, smoked an ill-smelling pipe, drank a few glasses of beer of an evening, and in general lived a monotonous, unambitious, unintellectual life. So that whatever emotion they manifested beyond that ordinarily caused by the mere fact of death was due wholly to the injustice of which they believed he had been a victim, and to the unusual manner of his taking off.

Bradley's widow, sitting near the head of the coffin with veil thrown back, watched them as they came and went. Whether or not others in the gathering marked the significance of the outpouring, she, at least, did not fail to do so. She sensed the spirit of the crowd. She saw in it a complete justification of her attitude toward the social forces that had kept her submissive and submerged, toward the power of wealth that had overridden her, toward the courts that had failed to give her justice.

She was not overwhelmed by grief. Why should she be? Bradley had never been a man to be ardently loved by any woman, much less by a woman of her mental capacity and attainments. Why she had married him was still a mystery among those who knew her. With her education, her quality of mind, her exceptional beauty, she might have had in marriage the most promising man in her circle who worked in any capacity for wages; she might, indeed, have had one of still higher social and business grade. But she chose to marry John Bradley. The reasons that govern the matrimonial choice are often inscrutable, and women

are protected, by the very fact of their sex, from ever being called upon to make them known. But if Mary Bradley had, at any time, repented her choice of a husband, no one had ever heard her express such a thought. She had remained absolutely faithful and helpful to him from the beginning to the end. And, in a crude, undemonstrative way, he had appreciated her and had been good to her. He had never abused her by word or deed, not even on those infrequent occasions when he had come home in his cups. He had turned over to her his weekly wages; he had never crossed her will; he had given her of his unimportant best. What more could she have asked? So, dispassionately, superficially perhaps, she sorrowed at his death. She felt no such pangs of grief as tore her heart when her girl baby died. That death had cut into the core of her being. But the passing of any soul that one has seen familiarly, illuminating a living body however dimly, cannot fail to arouse at least some semblance of sorrow in the normal human heart. And the demonstration made by her husband's fellow-workers touched her also. Glancing out through the open doorway she saw that the street in front of her house was full of them. Stephen Lamar came to her and asked her permission to address the people from her porch. She gave her consent willingly. Lamar was the protagonist of the workingmen of the city. He was their leader in the social revolt which was eventually to free them from the chains of capitalism, and restore to them their natural rights. Somewhere, somehow, he had become learned in the things that pertained to the struggle between the classes, he was gifted with a crude eloquence that made his speeches popular, and whenever he spoke to them, the workers heard him gladly. Now, as they saw him come out onto the porch and stand, with bared head, facing them, a murmur of approval ran through the crowd. He addressed them as "Comrades in Toil." No one

remembered ever to have seen Lamar engaged in any kind of manual labor; but, doubtless, he was doing vastly more for the workingmen by the activity of his brain and the eloquence of his tongue than he could possibly do by the labor of his hands. Moreover, as he himself reminded them occasionally, he had at one time been a day-laborer in a mill. So he had a right to address them as "Comrades in Toil."

He said: "I have just stood by the coffin of our departed fellow-worker; and I have been permitted by his widow to express to you a thought that came to me while looking on his dead face. As he lies there to-day, so any one of you may lie to-morrow, crushed and killed by the power of capitalism and the tyranny of the courts. But, you know, in the eyes of the capitalist, toil is nothing if it is you who toil, suffering is nothing if it is you who suffer, death is nothing if it is you who die. Why should the workingman have only toil and suffering and death, while his employers may treat themselves to all the soft comforts and luxuries that money can buy, and burden their women with silks and laces and jewels beyond price? It's wrong, my friends. How many diamonds did John Bradley's wife ever have? How many silks? How many jewelled ornaments? Was she not as much entitled to them, let me ask you, as the pampered wives of millionaires? Would not her beauty set them off as well? Has not she, by her woman's work, earned them a thousand times more than have the idle daughters of the rich? Did not John Bradley do his share of the world's work as well and faithfully as any plutocrat that ever breathed? and was he not therefore entitled to a just reward for his labor—a fair share of the profits of the world's business? And what did he receive? I'll tell you what. He received the right to work nine hours a day at paltry wages, in order that his capitalist employer might roll in wealth. He received, before he had reached his prime, a crushed

body and a darkened mind. Those responsible for his awful injuries refused him just compensation, and his faithful wife had the privilege of hearing the honorable court declare that the law provides no recompense for the poor. My friends, John Bradley lies there today, the victim of capitalist greed. Look on his dead face and ask yourselves how long you, who have the power to change this brutal system of exploitation of the toiler, will suffer yourselves to remain the passive instruments of your own undoing."

He paused, flung back a lock of his dark hair, and then, like a true Marc Antony, with deprecatory gesture and pleading tone he went on: "Pardon me, my friends! I did not intend, in this solemn hour, to rouse your passions or stir up hatred for your masters. But the contemplation of such a crime as has been committed here leads me into speech that, however unwise it may be, is the true expression of the feeling of my heart. I have but one word more to say. You have observed that there is no religious service here today. This is as it should be. It is not fitting that the body of our dead comrade should be committed to the earth under the forms and auspices of a Church controlled by capitalism and made pompous by wealth. Do not misunderstand me. With true piety I have no quarrel. Worship God if you want to; but not the God set up by the plutocrat in his costly temple into which the proletariat may hardly dare to set their feet. I tell you that when this social house of cards that the money kings have built up shall topple—as it will—to its fall, their soulless, bloodless, godless Church will join it in the wreck. That is all, my friends. I beg you to hold these things in your hearts as you fight for liberty, and some glorious morning you shall wake up free."

With the plaudits of his hearers ringing in his ears, he stepped back into the room where Mary Bradley sat.

"I heard you," she exclaimed, "and it was well said. I wish I could have said it myself."

Her commendation was sweeter to him than the crowd's applause.

"I'm glad you liked it," he replied. "I had a chance to stir those fellows up, and I took it. I know John would have been willing, and I'm sure you were."

"I'm willing to have anything done that will tend to bring this capitalistic crowd to their knees."

"Good! And what are you willing to do yourself?"

"Anything that I can."

"Good again! I have a little plan in mind by which you can be of vast help to us."

"I have my living to earn."

"You shall earn it. We will give you the opportunity. We need the assistance of a woman of your ability, in strong sympathy with the working classes."

"I am in sympathy; but, frankly, the strongest feeling in my mind at present is a desire for revenge."

He smiled and held out his hand to her. "You shall have it," he said. "I promise you."

"Then you may depend on me."

"When shall I come and talk it over with you?"

"Any day you choose."

"To-morrow?"

"Yes."

He released her hand and went back among the bearers.

But he did not cease to look on her. Few women are beautiful when dressed in deep mourning. Nor would Mary Bradley have been beautiful had she not stood erect, with veil thrown back, with white teeth gleaming at her parted lips, with flashing dark eyes showing forth her woman's determination. As it was, Lamar thought that he had never seen a picture more fascinating. And if his plan did not fail, she would

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work every day, side by side with him, in the interest of labor. If his deeper plan did not fail —— Lamar was not so fastidious as Barry Malleson had been about shutting out from his mind and contemplation the idea of making love to a woman who was at that moment sitting on one side of the coffined body of her husband while he sat on the other.

That afternoon, as the rector of Christ Church was returning from a service held by him in a mission chapel maintained by his church, he saw a funeral procession winding up a hill toward a suburban cemetery. The rest of his party had driven back to the city, but he had preferred to walk home alone. Of a man who stood at the curb he inquired whose funeral it was, and he was told that it was the funeral of John Bradley.

"The man that got smashed up in the Malleson mill," added his informant, "and they wouldn't give him no damages."

"Yes, I know about the case."

"And his wife went into court with a suit and got throwed out."

"I was in court at the time."

"That so? You're a preacher, ain't you?" looking at the clerical cut of his garments.

"Yes, I'm a preacher."

"Well, now, do you think that was a square deal?"

"No, frankly, I do not."

The man, he was evidently a laborer, reached out a hard hand and grasped the hand of the rector.

"You're all right!" he exclaimed. "But you're the first preacher I ever heard say as much as that. Most of 'em side the other way; or else they hedge, and won't say nothin'. Where do you preach?"

"At Christ Church."

"Oh, I've heard about you. I don't go to church much myself, but I'm comin' some Sunday to hear you

preach. They say you ain't a bit afraid to give the devil his due, so far as the rich is concerned."

"I try to preach a straight gospel, whether it affects the rich or the poor."

"That's right. If more of 'em would do that the laborin' men might git their rights some day, and a little religion besides."

"You think more of them would come to church?"

"Sure they would. All they want is to have the Church take as much account of the poor as it does of the rich. I'm comin' to hear you preach though, anyway; and I'll bring some of the boys along. Good-bye! I'm goin' up the hill now, with the funeral."

"I'll go with you if I may."

"Glad to have you. Come on."

A sudden desire had seized the clergyman to see the end of this grim, industrial tragedy that had stirred his heart.

The hearse was already half-way up the hill. It was followed by two coaches. Behind the coaches, in orderly procession, marched two hundred toilers; men who had been present at the Bradley house and had heard Lamar's speech, and who, in the exercise of class consciousness, had been glad, on their day of rest, to march two miles to the cemetery to see the body of their fellow-laborer consigned to earth.

Mr. Farrar and his newly-found friend fell in at the end of the procession, and followed it to the grave.

When Mary Bradley descended from the coach to take her place near the head of the coffin, where it lay, supported by cross-sticks, over the open pit, her eyes fell upon the rector of Christ Church.

One of those sudden impulses that overtake most women in times of stress, regardless of their walk in life, came upon her in that moment, and she acted upon it without further thought.

She turned to one of the bearers, standing near, and requested him to ask the Reverend Mr. Farrar to come

to her. The man looked at her in astonishment and did not move.

"Did you hear me?" she said. "I want that preacher to come here."

This time there was no mistaking the meaning of her request. The man went at once upon his errand, and the clergyman responded promptly to the summons.

She put aside her veil that he might see her face and know that she was in earnest. The bearers, waiting to perform their final service for John Bradley, looked at her in amazement. Others stared and wondered. Stephen Lamar, standing at the side of the grave, scowled in open disapproval.

Was she, after all, to belie his eloquent defense of a churchless funeral, yield to unreasoning custom, and have a preacher commit her husband's body to the earth? It was unbelievable.

"I have changed my mind," she said to the minister. "I wish you to speak at this burial, not as a preacher, but as a friend of John Bradley's and mine. I don't want anything said that's religious; just something that's comforting, that I can take home with me."

It was a strange request. How could a minister of the Church, with the inheritance of nineteen centuries upon him, stand by an open grave and commit the body of a human being to its shelter, and avoid all reference to that which alone had power to rob death of its sting and the grave of its victory? But the rector of Christ Church was quick in emergencies. He did not hesitate now, in either thought or deed. He directed the bearers to proceed with their task, and, as the coffin descended, he gathered up a handful of fresh earth from the mound at his side and scattered it into the open pit.

"Earth to earth—ashes to ashes—dust to dust."

As the last word left his lips the coffin found its resting place on the bed of the grave. He held up his hand while the people around him stood awed and expectant. His voice was clear and resonant as he spoke:

"In that day when the earth shall give up its dead, and when the spirits of those that were in prison shall be free, may we know that the unfettered soul of this our brother has attained the fulfilment of the joys that were denied him here, but which, through all the ages, have awaited his coming into that sweet and blessed country where labor and patience and a conscience void of offense shall have their just and reasonable reward. Amen!"

He stepped aside, the lowering straps were pulled harshly up, and the first spadeful of earth fell, with that hollow and gruesome sound which is like none other, on the narrow house in which the body of John Bradley lay.

Up to this moment, whatever her sorrow at her husband's death may have been, no one had seen Mary Bradley weep. But she was weeping now. Something in the preacher's words, or in his voice or manner, had touched the well-spring of her emotion, and had brought to her eyes tears which she made no effort to restrain.

She reached out her hand to the clergyman in a grateful clasp, but she said nothing, and, before he could speak to her a single word of comfort or consolation, she entered her coach and was driven away.

"It was a decent funeral," commented one of the toilers, as he shuffled slowly down the path leading to the cemetery gate.

"It was that," responded the fellow-worker at his side. "A labor-leader at the house and a preacher at the grave. What more could the man ask?"

"An' not too much religion in it either. Religion don't fit the workin' man; an' this priest seemed to sense it an' cut it out, more credit to him. They say he's a devilish good preacher, too, an' stands up great for labor. I've a mind I'll go hear him next Sunday."

"I'll go with ye, Thomas."

"Come along. We'll go together."

CHAPTER V

AN UNUSUAL SERMON

WHEN the rector of Christ Church entered the chancel on the Sunday morning following the funeral of John Bradley, and looked out over the well-filled pews, he had no reason to be dissatisfied with the size of his congregation. Yet a full church was no unusual thing. For many Sundays now, people had been coming in ever greater numbers to hear him preach. They were attracted not alone by his ability, his earnestness and his spirituality; but also by the novelty of his message to society concerning the proper relation of the Church to the wage-workers and to the poor. It was by the attendance of the wage-working class that congregations had, for the most part, been swollen. There were few accessions from homes of wealth. To the rich and the exclusive the new interpretation of the Gospel of Christ had not proved to be especially attractive. They had not formally repudiated it. They had not absented themselves from the services in order that they might not hear it. They had not relinquished any proper effort to uphold and maintain the dignity and usefulness of the Church, notwithstanding the divergent views of the rector on certain matters of no little importance. So that, on this particular Sunday morning, there was no evidence of desertion on the part of the rich and the well-to-do. It was noted, however, that the pews in the rear of the church, those renting at low prices and therefore occupied by parishioners in moderate or humble circumstances, were the ones that were filled to overflowing. It was plainly evident that more than one laboring-man and working-

woman had followed the example of the lookers-on at John Bradley's funeral, and had come to hear the minister preach. The story of his address at the grave on the preceding Sunday had spread through the ranks of the toilers, and was responsible in no small degree for the size of the congregation to-day. People wanted to hear, in his own pulpit, the clergyman who could stand by the open grave of a common laborer, one not given either to religious beliefs or practices, and say things acceptable to all of the dead man's friends, believers and disbelievers alike. So they had come, men in rusty attire, with stolid countenances and awkward bearing, women with bent shoulders and toil-hardened hands, and care-worn faces looking out from under the brims of hats and bonnets that had done Sunday service for unknown years. They did not respond to the prayers, nor join in the litany, nor kneel nor rise in accordance with the rubrics. But they were silent, attentive, respectful. They came not so much to worship as to listen.

The text that morning was the question asked by those offended aristocrats of old:

"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?"

The preacher called the attention of his hearers to the fact that the founder of the Christian religion, in His early manhood, had been a laborer. He had gone about, with hammer and axe, working for wages, as did the carpenter of to-day. He was born of humble parents, reared in adversity, hardened to toil. Why should not the wage-earner of the twentieth century listen to His gospel and follow in His footsteps? His message was especially to the humble and the poor. His condemnation was for the haughty and self-sufficient rich. He founded His Church on the brotherhood of man. Its very existence was declaratory of the solidarity of the human race. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ

Jesus. No other Messiah, no other religion in the history of the world has made so strong, so sympathetic an appeal to the humble and toil-worn. How utterly inconsistent it was, therefore, for the workers of the world to permit any other class to monopolize the benefits and enjoyments of the Church, an institution founded by one of their own, and dedicated to the principle that we are all "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him."

But the preacher's special appeal this morning was to the men and women of wealth and prominence in his church and parish, on behalf of their brothers and sisters on whom fortune had not so abundantly smiled. It was not an appeal for kindness and charity, or material help of any kind. It was an appeal for recognition.

"I say to you," he said, in concluding his sermon, "that until we professed followers of Christ utterly abandon the idea that the Church is an institution to be enjoyed, managed and patronized only by the cultured, the wealthy and the well-to-do, we shall not begin to understand the lesson taught us by the carpenter of Nazareth. Until we abandon the pleasing delusion that we have measured up to our full duty as members and supporters of the Church when we attend its services, recite its prayers, contribute to its charities, relieve its poor and visit its suffering; until we take a vastly broader view than that of our duty and privilege as Christian men and women, we are yet in our sins. Neither my work as minister nor your work as laymen will be satisfactory in the sight of God until these church portals and pew-doors stand equally wide open to the poor and the rich. If we would do as the Master would have us do, we must hold out welcoming hands to the toiler, no matter how humble the character of his toil, and we must say to him, not 'Come and be my guest to-day in the House of God,' but 'Come and be my fellow-worshiper, my comrade in Christ, my

brother and my friend.' I say to you frankly that I shall not be satisfied with my labors here until the workingman and the toiling-woman sit, side by side, in every pew, with the cultured and the rich; until they read together from the same prayer-book, recite together the same creed, kneel by each other at the same chancel-rail, and partake together of the Holy Communion in loving memory of Him who died for all men, 'the carpenter, the son of Mary.'"

Whether or not the humble folk who crowded the rear pews enjoyed the rest of the beautiful and solemn service, they were at least pleased with the sermon. On many a homely and rugged face, as these people passed out into the street, there was a smile of approval, and on many a lip that had never moved in prayer there was a comment of rejoicing that at least one preacher in the city understood the hearts of the poor and was not afraid to tell the rich, to their faces, what they ought to do.

But the regular, influential parishioners of Christ Church, those to whom the appeal had been made, were, apparently, not so well pleased with the sermon. It was not noticed that any among them made immediate response by mingling in friendly intercourse with the humble strangers who had come to their house of worship.

For the most part they waited in their pews until the unfamiliar faces had vanished beyond the outer doors. Then, by ones and twos and in little groups they moved slowly down the aisles. The stamp of unimpeachable respectability was on them all. They were well-mannered and well-dressed.

The majority of the men wore black coats and gray trousers and carried silk hats and canes in their hands, while the women were handsomely and appropriately gowned. The principal topic of conversation among them was, of course, the rector's sermon; and, regrettable as it may seem, there were few who were heard

to speak of it approvingly. Why should they approve of it? These people and their ancestors had worshiped in Christ Church through more than two generations. Their wealth and social standing had given to the church a position in the diocese second to none. Their polished manners and timely courtesies and gracious hospitality had attracted to the church many other people of wealth and prominence who, in their turn, had become regular attendants and liberal supporters. By their concern for the welfare of the poor they had made the name of Christ Church a synonym for well-organized and widely distributed Christian charity. Surely it hardly lay in the mouth of this young preacher, who had been scarcely two years in their pulpit, to announce to them that, notwithstanding all this, they were yet in their sins. It is no wonder that a mild spirit of resentment had been roused within them, or that it found expression as they talked with each other on their way to the street. It was noticeable that the men, as a rule, were not outspoken in their disapproval of the sermon. Business and professional men are apt to be cautious in the matter of a hasty expression of opinion. Experience has taught them the policy of being conservative. But the women were under no similar restraint. They did not hesitate to say what was in their minds. And their minds were, apparently, made up. Of course Mr. Farrar was an eloquent preacher and, personally, a most attractive man, and Mrs. Farrar was perfectly lovely; but really, the sermons they had been having of late were unpardonable, and the one of to-day had simply capped the climax. Such things were so unjust to the people who were doing the work of the Church and bearing its financial burdens; so subversive of all accepted theories and customs; so well calculated to stir up discontent and jealousy, if not open antagonism, in the breasts of the envious and ignorant. One woman, prominent in the church, pompous and matronly, de-

clared that she would not again humiliate herself by coming to listen to such heterodox preaching. She considered such sermons as the one of to-day to be positively irreligious, and destructive of the first principles of Christianity.

Following her down the aisle came Ruth Tracy and her mother, and it was to them that this opinion had been expressed. Ruth's face flushed and she made no reply; but Mrs. Tracy nodded her head in approval and said, "Yes, indeed!" Mr. Tracy, the husband and father, was not present. He went to church only on rare occasions. His week-days were strenuous, and his Sundays were needed for rest and recreation. He was the senior partner in the law firm of Tracy, Black and Westgate, of which firm Ruth's fiancé was the junior member.

Before Mrs. Tracy and her daughter reached the curb where their car was waiting, Westgate joined them.

"And what did you think of the sermon?" asked the elder woman, after the morning greetings had been exchanged.

"Oh, I know what Philip thought of it," interrupted Ruth. "He thought it was an unwarranted attack on the supporters of the church, and a sop to socialism. Didn't you, Philip?"

The young man laughed and colored a little as he replied:

"While I wouldn't want to be quoted in just that way, you have gauged my mind with reasonable accuracy."

"I knew it," responded the girl. "And now I'll tell you what I think. I think it was a brave and conscientious sermon, and fully warranted by existing conditions."

She stood there, handsomely and good-naturedly defiant, attractive in the eyes of her lover, even in her opposition to him.

"It was brave enough," he responded; "and there's no doubt about the man's conscientiousness; but I believe he's mistaken."

At that moment Barry and Miss Chichester came up.

"Are you talking about the sermon?" asked Miss Chichester. "Barry and I are agreed that it was simply impossible, aren't we, Barry?"

"Preposterous!" asserted Barry. "Why, don't you know, the thing would never work out. We couldn't really have those people in our pews with us. Could we, Mrs. Tracy?"

"I'm pretty sure that I couldn't have them in mine," Mrs. Tracy replied.

"Why, just think of it!" added Barry. "For instance, the vice-president of the Malleson Manufacturing Company reading the responses out of the same prayer-book with a common day-laborer in his employ. How could the proper attitude be preserved on week days between the employer and the employee? Why, Phil, old man, the whole thing is absurd!"

"You might stay away from church, Barry," suggested Ruth.

"Don't put that idea into his head," said Westgate. "Barry needs all the religion he can possibly absorb."

Then Mrs. Tracy came to the rescue of the vice-president.

"Barry's not so far wrong," she declared. "It's ridiculous to think of having these people in our pews. Just imagine Lucy Breen sitting with me. You all know poor Lucy, with her green gown and her red hat with the enormous white feather in it. Why, I should go into hysterics. Really I should."

"And," laughed Ruth, "if Red-nosed Mike the burglar should sit with you he'd steal your Sunday dollar before ever the alms-basin came around."

"Now, I don't think it's fair," said Miss Chichester, "to make fun of Barry and Mrs. Tracy that way. It's really a serious matter. Don't you think so, Phil?"

"Very!" responded Phil gravely.

"And," continued Mrs. Tracy, "he said we should commune together. Now, just think of it! There's our gardener, Jim, you know, who chews tobacco constantly. Imagine having him next you at communion, and having him drink first out of the cup! Heavens!"

She shuddered and drew her skirts closer about her ample figure, lest haply some unclean member of the proletariat, passing by, should brush advertently against them.

"I think," said Miss Chichester, "that some one ought to speak to Mr. Farrar. I don't believe he really knows how objectionable his theories are."

"Good idea!" exclaimed Barry. "I'll speak to him myself. He'll listen to me. The thing has got to be stopped before some of those people actually intrude themselves into our pews. There isn't one of them——" Barry stopped suddenly. A vision of the fascinating face and trim figure of the woman of Factory Hill had flashed into his mind.

"What is it, Barry?" inquired Miss Chichester in apparent alarm.

"I was just thinking," replied Barry, hesitatingly, "that there might be exceptions—exceptions, you know."

"Mrs. Bradley, for instance?" asked Miss Chichester.

"Why," responded Barry, "I don't think Mrs. Bradley would be what you might call really objectionable."

"And who is Mrs. Bradley?" inquired Mrs. Tracy.

"Oh," replied Westgate, "she's one of Barry's discoveries in humble life."

"Is she the one who lost the lawsuit?" inquired Ruth.

"The very one," answered Westgate. "I shall not soon forget how you took me to task for my part in that case."

"I did think," responded Ruth, "that it was a shame to send her out of court empty-handed. And I think

so still, begging Barry's pardon for expressing myself so forcibly in his presence."

"You can't hurt my feelings, Ruth," exclaimed Barry. "Phil did his duty. And I must say that the woman behaved very decently about it afterward."

"So decently," added Westgate, "that Barry went up the other day to make her a gift. Tell the ladies about that adventure, Barry."

"Oh, I know all about it," exclaimed Miss Chichester. "Barry told me about it the same evening."

"But we don't know," said Ruth. "What happened, Barry?"

"Why," replied Barry, "I went up, as Phil says, to make her a gift of a little money, four hundred dollars, to be exact. We usually make a gift to widows of our employees. And, would you believe me, the woman declined to accept it."

"Remarkable!" exclaimed Mrs. Tracy.

"It's true," continued Barry. "But I'm going up again before long to try to persuade her to change her mind. I—I really think she needs the money."

"And Barry's going to take me with him. Aren't you, Barry?" broke in Miss Chichester.

"Why, I suppose so," replied Barry, "if you still want to go."

"Indeed, I want to go."

Then Mrs. Tracy inquired: "Is she the woman who is so irreligious? has no use for the Church? and wouldn't have a preacher at her husband's funeral?"

"She's the one," replied Westgate.

"Then I think," said Mrs. Tracy, turning to Barry, "that you might find better use for your money. Why don't you give it to religious people who are in want; people of our own church?"

"Why," responded Barry, "I think there's a fair chance of getting her into the church. I spoke to Farrar about her and he's going to see what he can do with her in a religious way."

"It seems to me, Barry," said Ruth mischievously, "that you're very much interested in the handsome Mrs. Bradley."

This time Miss Chichester responded for Barry. "He is, Ruth; but purely in a sociological way. He hasn't the faintest idea of becoming unduly impressed by her beauty. Have you, Barry?"

"She's a deucedly handsome woman," replied Barry.

"Handsome or not," said Mrs. Tracy, "I don't think such persons should be encouraged and made much of. Mr. Farrar is certainly making a very serious mistake when he caters to the lower classes. Why, if he had his way, there'd be no exclusiveness in the church at all."

"Indeed there wouldn't," replied Ruth heartily.

"Right you both are!" exclaimed Barry. "That is as—as a rule. Every rule has its exceptions, you know."

"Well," added Mrs. Tracy, moving toward her car, "don't let's talk about it any more. It doesn't leave a good taste in the mouth. You'll ride up with us, won't you, Philip, and have luncheon? No? Then give my love to your mother and tell her I'm coming over to see her to-morrow afternoon. Come, Ruth!"

She entered her car, assisted by Westgate, but her daughter hesitated.

"I've a mind," she said, "to walk up the hill with Philip; it's such a beautiful day. I'll be home long before luncheon time, mother."

"A very wise suggestion," remarked Westgate, "and one which I shall be delighted to adopt."

"What a happy thought!" exclaimed Miss Chichester. "We'll do that too, won't we, Barry?"

"Why," said Barry, "I thought of going down-town for a little while before luncheon. I want to slip into the office and look at something."

"Oh, Barry! And it's such a beautiful day!"

Miss Chichester looked up at him pleadingly.

"I know, but this is really a matter I ought to attend to."

"You can go down early to-morrow morning and attend to it. I shall be so disappointed if you don't walk up with me. And stop and have luncheon with us. Do! Father is so fond of discussing politics with you."

"Thank you, Jane. But it's out of the question for me to stop to luncheon. It really is."

"Then walk up with me, anyway."

"All right! I'll do that."

Mrs. Tracy was already moving homeward in her luxuriously appointed car, and Ruth and her lover had started slowly up the walk. His eyes were alight and his cheeks aglow with pleasant anticipation. To walk a mile with Ruth Tracy through the invigorating air of a beautiful September noonday was a privilege that any man might covet, much more a man in whose heart she filled so large and so queenly a place as she did in Philip Westgate's.

But no sooner were they on their way than recurrence was had to the subject of the morning sermon.

"I like Mr. Farrar," said Westgate. "I believe he intends to say and do the right thing. But he has permitted himself, by reason of his sympathy with toiling humanity, to be led off into strange paths."

"I like him too," responded Ruth. "And I can't help feeling that he's on the right track. I don't believe there's any other way than the one he suggests to evangelize the working people. Just think what he's done already. Did you ever see more persons of all kinds coming to the services at Christ Church than he is drawing there now?"

"No; but big congregations do not necessarily make the Church prosperous, nor advance the cause of religion. These people come because it pleases them to hear attacks made on the rich, and commendation given to the poor. It is simply an expression of class conscious-

ness with them. They have no religious motive in coming."

"But how else are you going to get them at all under the influence of the Church? Here I've been doing guild work for years. I've distributed I don't know how many bushels of food and loads of outgrown garments to the poor; and how many people do you suppose I've been able to bring into the Church by doing it? Just four. I counted them up yesterday. I tell you, Phil, these people will not be bribed into accepting religion. What they want, as Mr. Farrar explained, is recognition, not charity. When they get that we'll get them into the Church. The Church needs new life, and Mr. Farrar has chosen the only way to supply it."

"I'm afraid he's putting into it more discord than life. I can't believe that the pulpit is the place from which to propound doctrines of social and political economy. And there are many in Christ Church that are not only like-minded with me, but who resent the rector's attitude far more than I do."

"That's because you're all of you behind the times. Because you're over conservative, just as mother is; just as all these people are who have more than enough for themselves, and can't begin to appreciate the desires and struggles and needs of the poor."

Westgate's patience was ebbing. He felt that the girl was taking an entirely unreasonable attitude.

"Ruth," he said, "you are losing your head over this thing. You are being carried away by your sympathies and by this man's plausible appeal. You don't detect the fallacies in his position. You are not exercising your judgment."

"Oh," she replied, "I know my own mind, and I've thought it all out, and I've read, and I've investigated on my own account, and I've come to the conclusion that if all these dreadful social ills, and this degrading and unremitting toil, and this hopeless poverty are ever to be done away with, the Church must be the leader

in the movement to abolish them. There's no earthly power or influence that can accomplish the task unaided by the power and influence of the Church. Oh, I know that Mr. Farrar is going about the work in the right way, and I know that in the end his work will produce splendid results."

She paused, half out of breath, wondering a little at her own temerity, and, with a look partly of defiance, partly of anxiety, she glanced up into her lover's face. He was plainly distressed. He felt that their views were so utterly divergent that the discussion could not be continued without endangering the harmony that should prevail between them. Yet it was hard to hold his peace and permit this girl with whom he was so profoundly in love, whose future was to be so irrevocably bound up in his, to enter on a course of which both his conscience and his judgment so heartily disapproved.

"I'm sorry," he said after a moment's pause, "more sorry than I can tell you, that we don't agree in this matter. Unless Mr. Farrar adopts a complete change of policy, I can see serious trouble ahead. And when that trouble comes I should like to have you in harmony with me."

"And I should like to be in harmony with you, Philip; I should like it dearly; but I can't afford to stifle my conscience and ignore my reason—not even for you."

It was plain that her mind was made up, and that neither argument, appeal nor entreaty would move her from the path on which she had set out.

"Well," said Westgate, "don't let's talk about it any more now. The crisis hasn't come yet. Maybe it won't come. I hope to heaven it won't! At any rate there's no use to-day in our borrowing trouble for to-morrow."

They walked on in the mild September sunlight, up the hill, by the pleasant streets that bordered on

Fountain Park, past homes of ease and luxury, until Ruth's own home was reached. But a reserve had fallen on them. The first shadow had drifted across their common path and lay impalpably about them. Could it be possible that so slight a shadow as this, deepening and darkening, would eventually so blind their eyes that, unseen each by the other, they would go stumbling and alone, by cruelly divergent paths, toward unknown goals as far apart as the antipodes of eternity?

This was the thought and fear that hugged Westgate's mind as he strolled back down the hill that day to his mother's home in the city. And, as he walked, the glory of the day was obscured. Gray clouds dragged their unwelcome bulk across the sun, a chill and hostile wind set the shadowed leaves of the trees to trembling and sighing, and the gloom that forebodes the coming storm settled down upon the earth.

CHAPTER VI

THE VESTRY OBJECTS

THE vestry of Christ Church was a conservative body. Not ultra-conservative, but reasonably so; the conservatism that might be expected of successful business men. Nor was it an overly religious body. Some of its members were not, never had been, and never expected to be communicants of the Church. But, as a whole, it was unquestionably and sincerely devoted to the welfare of Christ Church. Possibly the material welfare of the church loomed larger in the eyes of these gentlemen than did its spiritual interests. Be that as it may, they left nothing undone which, in their judgment, it was desirable to do to promote the prosperity of the church of which they were the governing body. They had this purpose in mind when they called the Reverend Robert Bruce Farrar to be their rector. They felt that they were acting with wisdom and foresight. He was certainly a rising young man. He was idolized by the people to whom he had ministered, and he came with a splendid recommendation from the bishop of his diocese. He was understood to be fairly liberal in his social views, but he had, as yet, developed no dangerous tendencies; and it was thought that, in his new environment, there could be no possibility of such development. Since the day of his installation, however, the minds of many of the members of the vestry had undergone a gradual change concerning him. They no longer felt that he was quite safe. And to that feeling the sermons that he had been preaching of late had given a decided impetus. It is true that, up to this time, there had been no serious or open differ-

ences between the rector and his vestry. But it was plainly apparent, both to him and to them, that the day was fast approaching when such differences would become acutely developed unless either he changed his course or they changed their opinions. Certain of the vestrymen, in their consultations with each other, on the street, at the club, or in their homes, had deprecated, in rather strong language, the social theories of the rector, and had suggested that it was about time to call a halt. But nothing had been done. Then came the sermon of Sunday, with its strange and radical plea for social equality in the church, and what had been merely a thought in the minds, or a suggestion on the tongues, of certain members of the vestry, suddenly developed into a desire for action. The man had taken the bit in his teeth and was trying to run away with them. It was necessary that something should be done.

The regular monthly meeting of the vestry was to be held on the Friday evening following the Sunday on which the objectionable sermon had been preached, and it was agreed, among those who protested, that this would be an opportune time to voice their protest, and express their determination, and reach, if possible, some kind of an understanding as to the future. Nor was the Reverend Mr. Farrar so dull of comprehension that he failed to anticipate that there might be expressions of opinion at the meeting adverse to his views and policy. Indeed, he set out deliberately to invite such expressions of opinion, if there were any members of the vestry who disagreed with him. He felt that there must be no longer any evasion or paltering on either side; that, if necessary, armed neutrality must give way to active warfare; that a crisis had been reached beyond which Christ Church would advance in accordance with her God-given privilege, or else recede, disintegrate, and be lost. The stage was surely set for dramatic developments.

The meeting was to be held, as usual, in the rector's study, after the mid-week evening service. Judge Bosworth, the senior warden, was the first to arrive. He was followed closely by Westgate. While they were awaiting the coming of the others there was some casual conversation on different topics, but it was marked by an air of restraint of which all three men were aware. Then, in rapid succession, the remaining members of the vestry came in—all but old Mr. Ray, who was ill and unable to leave his house.

They knelt with due devotion while brief prayers were read, and then the usual order of business was taken up. The treasurer's report was made and commented on, and other matters of more or less importance to the parish were considered and disposed of.

When the order of "new business" was reached, the rector said:

"There is a matter, gentlemen, on which I desire to have your judgment, and, if possible, your favorable action. You have doubtless observed the increased attendance on our services by people of the laboring class. I am convinced that it is among these people, during the next few years, that our work must largely be done. We must break down the indifference, the prejudice, the open antagonism which so many of them manifest, not wholly without reason, toward the Church. If we extend to them a fitting welcome, and if we properly provide for them, I have no doubt they will continue to come to us in increasingly large numbers, to their own spiritual benefit, and to the great strengthening of the Church. It is plain that we cannot accommodate them under our present system by which we rent pews for the exclusive use of our several families. It is my recommendation, therefore, and my hearty desire, that the renting system shall be abolished, and that all pews shall be open freely to all worshipers. It is for you to act on the recommendation."

For a moment no one spoke. The proposition was

too startling, too revolutionary, to be replied to at once. The parishioners of Christ Church had occupied exclusive pews for two generations and more. They had come to consider them as much their private property as were their own dining-rooms, or their front porches. How could this vestry shatter, in a night, the traditions of years? It was a foregone conclusion that the rector's recommendation would meet with disapproval —and it did. Mr. Hughes, capitalist, was the first to express his dissent.

"I, for one," he said, "am opposed to it. It would deprive us of a fixed income. It would revolutionize the policy and the customs of the church in this respect. I do not believe the bulk of our pewholders would ever consent to it. I, myself, would be entirely unwilling to relinquish my right to the exclusive use of a pew. I am ready to pay for one, and I do pay for it, and when I pay for it I propose to reserve the right to say who shall sit in it."

"I appreciate your point of view, Mr. Hughes," replied the rector; "but I feel that we must look at the matter from a broader standpoint. Do we want these people to worship with us or do we not? If we do, it is plain that we must provide for them. They, themselves, feel that it is something of an intrusion for them to occupy pews set apart for the exclusive use of others. Many of them cannot afford even to pay rentals for sittings; and, if they could, we have not the vacant sittings for them. What shall we do with them? Shall we give them to understand that they are unwelcome, or shall we admit them to the privileges of Christ Church on an equal footing with ourselves? The problem is yours, gentlemen."

"We might," suggested Rapalje, engaged in real estate and insurance, "provide a certain section of the church in the rear to accommodate them, moving our own people farther to the front, and doubling up in the occupancy of pews, if necessary."

"That, in my judgment," replied the rector, "would only be an affront to them. They would not accept discrimination of that kind. It would be equivalent to saying to them that the Church reserves the 'chief seats' for the rich; that the rear pews are good enough for the poor. If we say that to them they will leave us, without doubt. It is because of such an attitude on our part that the poor have been lost to us for so many years."

Then Colonel Boston, president of the S. E. & W. Railroad, his patience nearly exhausted, spoke up:

"Well, I, for one, am willing to lose them. I don't see why we should be called upon to house the rabble from Factory Hill. They have churches nearer their homes, run by their own kind, with preachers of their own sort. Let them go there. I don't propose, when I come to church, to hunt for a vacant seat somewhere, and push myself into it; and I'm utterly opposed to having my wife and daughter crowded and elbowed in their pew by all kinds of people. I simply won't stand for it."

The rector was still calm and deliberate, but tremendously in earnest, as he replied:

"You can close the doors of your church in the faces of God's poor if you wish, gentlemen. They will not come if they find they're not wanted; you can rest assured of that. But the moment you refuse to welcome them, the moment you make it openly manifest that ours is a church exclusively for the rich and the well-to-do, that moment you deprive the Church of its life and soul, you separate it wholly from Jesus Christ, whose message and whose mission was primarily to the humble and the poor."

Judge Bosworth sought to pour oil on the waters which were becoming dangerously troubled.

"Would not the proper solution of this whole question," he asked, "be the founding and support of a mission chapel for these people in their own neighborhood?

We have such a chapel on the east side, why not establish one on Factory Hill? I would be glad to contribute for such a purpose."

"It would not solve the difficulty, Judge," responded the rector. "These people do not want missions and chapels when they are within walking distance of the church itself. The thing implies exactly the same sort of discrimination as would be implied by herding them in rear pews. They don't want to be accommodated, they don't want to be patronized, they want to be recognized as having equal rights with us in the House of God. And until we are willing to accord to them that recognition we may as well let them alone, for we shall never be able to hold them."

Again the railroad magnate broke in. His patience, which was already running low when he first spoke, appeared now to be entirely exhausted.

"Then I say let them alone!" he exclaimed. "I'm sick and tired of this everlasting kow-towing to a class of people who are never satisfied with what's being done for them."

To this last explosion the rector paid no heed. He looked around over the persons assembled in the room. "I would like to hear," he said, "from other gentlemen of the vestry. If most of you are opposed to the proposition, I will not press it at this time; but I will begin a campaign of education among the people of the parish, so that when it again comes before you, it will come backed by the force of public opinion. What is your thought in the matter, Mr. Cochran?"

"I quite agree with Mr. Hughes and Colonel Boston," replied Mr. Cochran. "I think it would be extremely unwise to abolish our system of rentals."

"And what is your opinion, Mr. Emberly?"

"I am heartily in favor of adopting the suggestion of the rector," was Emberly's answer.

Nobody was surprised at Emberly. He always sided with the rector. But his opinion carried no great

weight. He contributed sparsely, from a lean purse, for the support of the Church. How could he be expected to have a leading voice in her councils?

Probably Mr. Hazzard, junior warden, and superintendent of the Sunday-school, would also have agreed with the rector if his opinion had been asked; but, before he could be interrogated, Westgate interrupted.

"It seems to me," he said, "to be quite futile to discuss this question at this time. Our pews are rented until Easter Monday of next year, and it is now only September. We cannot abrogate the contracts already made. I suggest, therefore, that we postpone discussion of the matter until some future meeting. In the meantime, the parish as a whole will have opportunity to consider it, and we can take it up later if it should be deemed advisable to do so."

"An excellent suggestion!" exclaimed Mr. Hughes.

"I am quite willing to yield to Mr. Westgate's judgment," said the rector.

"But," added Mr. Hughes, "there is another matter closely related to the one just under discussion, about which I desire to speak. I mean no disrespect, and I have no ill-will toward Mr. Farrar. But there has been much criticism in the parish concerning the sermons he has been preaching to us of late, especially the one of last Sunday morning. It is needless for me to specify in what manner it was objectionable. We feel that a continuance of such sermons will seriously affect, if not entirely disrupt, the church. It has occurred to me, therefore, that if the vestry, as a body, should inform the rector of the feeling in the parish, and request him to discontinue the advocacy of his favorite sociological doctrines from the pulpit, he would probably heed the request, and thus save the church from possible disaster."

The rector looked into the eyes of his critic without flinching. Moreover, there was in his own eyes a light that might or might not have been a signal of contempt and defiance.

"Do you really mean that, Mr. Hughes?" he asked.

"I am very much in earnest," was the reply. "And I believe I express the feeling of a majority of the members of the vestry. How is it, gentlemen? Am I right?"

He looked around on the men in the room, and all save two of them nodded their heads or spoke in approval. The rector noted their attitude, but neither in his voice nor manner did he display surprise, disappointment or resentment.

"Then let me tell you," he said quietly, "that any backward movement on my part is entirely out of the question. I feel that I am preaching Christ's gospel, and that His message is to the poor as well as to the rich. To-day, so far as material things are concerned, the poor are poor because they are not receiving their just share of the wealth which they produce. Some day all this will be changed. There will be economic justice, and with economic justice will come social equality. There will be no rich, no poor, no aristocracy, no proletariat. I shall welcome that day. But, so far as things spiritual are concerned, that day dawned when Jesus Christ was born. In His religion there is no room for distinction between the classes. The Church which He founded, and its house of worship, should be open, freely and always, without distinction of any kind, to 'all sorts and conditions of men.'"

"Good!" exclaimed Emberly.

The rector paid no heed to the interruption, but went on:

"And so long as I am rector of Christ Church I shall endeavor to break down, and to keep down within it, all distinctions between rich and poor, and between class and class. That is why I have been urging you gentlemen of wealth to blot out social differences in the House of God. I want the humblest parishioner to feel that he has an equal right with any of us to the use and

benefit and enjoyment of Christ Church. It is only because you stand aloof and will not welcome him on equal terms that he does not feel so now. I hope that, eventually, your attitude will be changed; and, in that hope, I shall keep on inviting the poor to come to us, and I shall continue to preach the abolition of social distinctions in the Church."

It is not probable that the Reverend Mr. Farrar had any expectation of bringing the members of the vestry, offhand, to the acceptance of his views. If he had, it needed only a glance at their faces to show him that his words had had no convincing effect. Of course Emberly and Hazzard, both of whom had been with him from the beginning, showed marked signs of approval; but as to the others, their opposition to his theories appeared only to have become accentuated by his speech.

"That sounds to me," said the capitalist, "very much like socialism. I hope we are not going to have that fallacious and sinister doctrine preached to us, also, from the pulpit of Christ Church. Do I understand, Mr. Farrar, that you are a socialist?"

"A Christian socialist, yes," was the answer. "So far as socialism is in accord with the articles of our religion, with the canons of our Church, and with the message of Jesus Christ, I am a socialist. I believe, gentlemen, that socialism is coming, and that eventually it will be the policy of the state. It is foolish to blind our eyes to it. As it exists to-day there is much in its theory and propaganda that is anti-Christian. Some of its leaders are distinctly irreligious. Some of them are bitterly antagonistic to the Church. If such men as these are permitted to dominate the socialism of the future, religion and Christian morals will be in jeopardy. There is only one power on earth that can rescue society from such an evil, and that is the power of the Church. If the Church will but recognize socialism for the good that is in it; help to con-

serve its vital principles and to rob it of its evil excrescences, it will, in my judgment, have performed a mighty service for humanity. If, then, the Church will go still farther, and help it on, thus reformed, to political and economic victory, we shall carry out the principles for which Christ contended. I shall make it my business, gentlemen, both in the pulpit and out of it, to urge that policy upon the Church, and upon all Christian people. I believe, Mr. Hughes, that I have answered your question."

He had answered it, indeed. But his answer was anything but comforting or satisfying to the greater part of the gentlemen who sat around him. Colonel Boston was especially indignant.

"Socialism," he declared, growing red in the face, "is a pernicious doctrine; and it doesn't help it any to tack the word Christian to it. There always have been class distinctions in the world, and there always will be. It's human nature. There always have been men of brains and energy and principle who have outraced and outranked their fellows, and there always will be. You can no more reduce living men to a dead level of equality in everything, or in anything, than you can make every blade of grass to grow exactly like every other blade. The thing is simply abhorrent to nature. I'm opposed to socialism in any form, under any name. And, so far as I have any influence, it shall not be preached from the pulpit of Christ Church."

Before the rector could reply, or any one else could break into the discussion, Mr. Claybank, a retired merchant, rose to his feet and drew a folded paper from his pocket.

"Apropos of Colonel Boston's remarks," he said, "and in line with the thought so well expressed by Mr. Hughes in opening the discussion, and after consultation with one or two of my fellow-vestrymen, I have prepared a resolution which I desire to offer."

He adjusted his eye-glasses with nervous haste, un-

folded the paper with trembling fingers, cleared his throat and began to read.

"RESOLVED that the vestry of Christ Church view with disapproval and alarm the tendency toward socialism and its dangerous theories as manifested in the recent sermons of our rector, the Reverend Mr. Farrar. We regard those theories as harmful to religion and destructive to society; and it is our request that our rector discontinue the preaching of such sermons, and confine himself hereafter to such doctrines as are commonly accepted by the Church, and taught in the Christian religion."

Before Claybank had scarcely finished reading, Mr. Hughes was on his feet.

"If the senior warden will take the chair," he said, "I will move the adoption of this resolution."

But, before the senior warden could put the question, or even assume charge of the meeting, Westgate broke in:

"Gentlemen," he exclaimed, "I hope this resolution will not be adopted nor put to vote. I was not consulted in its preparation or I should have disapproved of it. I am as heartily opposed to socialism as any man here. I have no sympathy even with Christian socialism. I regret that our rector sees fit to advocate it. But we should not be hasty in putting on him the indignity implied in that resolution. There is a better way out. We should approach him in a friendly, not in a hostile spirit. We should first reason together. I, myself, will undertake, in a half hour's friendly talk with him, to show him the utter fallacy of the whole socialistic creed. It is a mistake to pounce upon him suddenly in this fashion. I beg that the gentleman will withdraw his resolution."

But the Reverend Mr. Farrar did not wait for the resolution to be withdrawn. Westgate's last word was hardly out of his mouth before the rector was on his feet.

"I very deeply appreciate," he said, "the kind thought of Mr. Westgate. I shall be glad to discuss with him, at any time, the questions that have been raised here to-night. But I do not ask for the withdrawal of the resolution. If there is to be a breach between my vestry and me, it may as well come now as later. If my appeals to the rich and my concern for the poor have brought me into disrepute with this body, the situation is not likely to grow less acute. For I say to you plainly that, even if you were to adopt this resolution by unanimous vote, I should continue to preach not only the straight, but the whole gospel of Christ. And it is a gospel that demands the abolition of classes, the recognition of the humble, the placing of the toiler, no matter what the character of his toil, on the same social plane with you in every phase of the life of the Church. If you knew these people as I do, if you understood them as I do, if you loved them as I do, you would bid me Godspeed in my work. And it is because I want you to know them and love them and honor them that I shall not cease to preach as I have done, to you and to them, until my object in so preaching shall have been fully accomplished. So, gentlemen, if you choose to throw down the gauntlet, I shall pick it up; and God shall stand as judge between us."

Claybank, who was still on his feet, and who was still holding his eye-glasses in one trembling hand, and his resolution in the other, broke in immediately.

"In deference to Mr. Westgate," he said, "for whose judgment I have great respect, I will withdraw my resolution. But I want to give notice now, that if there is a continuance, as has been threatened, of the kind of sermons we have been having of late, I shall, at the next meeting of the vestry, offer a resolution demanding the immediate resignation of the Reverend Mr. Farrar as rector of Christ Church."

"Mr. Chairman, I protest against this attempt to muzzle a true servant of Christ!"

It was Hazzard who spoke. He was indignant to the core.

"Then let him preach Christianity and not socialism," retorted Mr. Claybank.

"You—you don't know what Christianity is!" shouted Emberly.

"I know what it isn't!" roared Colonel Boston. "It isn't the deification of the rabble!"

By this time every man in the room was on his feet. A half-dozen voices were struggling to be heard. A most unchristian scene was on the verge of enactment. It was then that Westgate, quick-witted and masterful, saved the day for decency.

"Mr. Chairman," he shouted, "if there is no further proper business to come before the meeting, I move you, in the name of Christian charity, that we do now adjourn."

The motion was put and carried. The wrangling ceased. The gentlemen of the vestry said good-night to the rector, and passed out into the street. But the fires of opposition had not been quenched. They only awaited encouragement from the first hostile breeze to blaze up anew.

CHAPTER VII

THE RECTOR'S WIFE

THE deliberations of boards in control of private corporations are not, as a rule, presumed to be disclosed to the public. This rule holds especially good when applied to vestries of churches. It is not, usually, either necessary or wise that the whole body of parishioners should be taken into the confidence of the vestry. There are so many things that can better be discussed and settled by a small, representative body of men, with power to act, than by the parish at large. It was, of course, tacitly understood by the members of the vestry that nothing should be said, outside their own membership, concerning the clash with the rector on the night of the vestry meeting. Nevertheless, the entire incident, with many variations and exaggerations, had become public property within twenty-four hours after its occurrence. It is a moral impossibility to keep such things hid. The very light of the next day reveals them. Moreover, most of the vestrymen were married. Their wives were as deeply interested as they in all matters pertaining to the Church. It is a man of extraordinary firmness who can hold back from an anxious and devoted wife legitimate information on a subject which is close to her heart.

At any rate, before sundown the next day, the whole parish was buzzing with the news of the conflict at the vestry meeting. Of course the people of the parish were divided in their opinions. The greater part of them, comprising nearly all of the rich and well-to-do, were strenuously opposed not only to the policy of free pews, but also to the idea of meeting the inferior classes

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on terms of social equality in any of the affairs of the Church. They were quite willing, as they had always been, to give liberally to the charities of the Church, and to uphold its institutional life and activities to the best of their ability; but when it came to a matter of social recognition, they drew the line, and they drew it straight.

It was, broadly speaking, only among the less prosperous persons in the parish that those were found who sided warmly with the rector. Those who were called "advanced," "progressive," "visionary," those with deep sympathies and humanitarian impulses, those with new theories of government, and a passionate desire to witness, if not to assist in, the overturning of the social order; these were the ones who, together with nearly all of the poor, espoused heartily the cause of the rector, and as heartily condemned the reactionary attitude of the vestry.

It was early in the afternoon of Saturday that the news reached Miss Chichester, or rather that Miss Chichester overtook the news. There was seldom anything in the way of church gossip or a parish sensation that did not early reach the ears of Miss Chichester on its way through the community. And this vestry incident was a particularly attractive, not to say sensational bit of gossip. Miss Chichester could not rest with the exhilarating burden of it on her mind. She was eaten up with curiosity to know how the Reverend Mr. Farrar was taking the blunt criticism that, according to her informant, had been hurled at his head by certain members of the vestry, and how Mrs. Farrar was bearing up under the indignities that had been heaped upon her husband. Naturally and logically the most appropriate way of satisfying her curiosity would be to call at the rectory. As she was active and diligent in church work there were plenty of excuses for such a call. She gowned herself becomingly and sallied forth. At the corner of the street

leading to the rectory she met Barry Malleson. He also was in full afternoon dress.

"Oh, Barry!" she exclaimed, "have you heard the news?"

"What news?" he inquired.

"About the awful time they had at the vestry meeting last night."

"Yes, I heard about it. I consider it highly improper to have such a rumpus as that in a vestry meeting. I consider it time for some one with brains and judgment to interfere. I thought I'd better see what I could do. I'm just on my way up now to call on Farrar and try to get the thing settled."

"How perfectly lovely of you! I was going up there too. I wanted to see Mr. Farrar about the Doncaster family. We'll go up together."

"No; I won't interfere with your call. My errand 'll keep. I'll go some other day."

"Indeed, you won't! You'll go now. I'll not be a bit in your way."

"No; I'll wait."

"Barry! Don't be foolish! Come along!"

"All right! I can tell him in a few minutes what I think of the situation. Then you can have him the rest of the afternoon."

"What do you think of the situation, Barry?"

"I think it's ridiculous!"

"Isn't it!"

"Yes; Farrar's dead wrong. I shall tell him so."

"How I shall enjoy hearing you tell him!"

They were passing up the street in the shade of aristocratic trees beginning now to take on the flush of autumn. She looked up coyly and trustingly into his face as she walked and talked, but he was too deeply absorbed in the importance of his errand to give much heed to her patent admiration.

It was not far to the rectory. The maid who answered the bell told them that Mr. Farrar was in and

alone. He met them in the hall and took them into his study.

"Miss Chichester has an errand," said Barry, "that she wishes to dispose of, and when she's through I have something on my own mind that I want to talk about."

"Oh, no, Barry!" cried Miss Chichester. "You're entitled to the first hearing. Your errand is so much more important than mine."

"Shall I act as umpire?" inquired the rector.

"No," replied Barry. "It doesn't make much difference. I'll say what I want to and get through and get out. Why, you know, I came up to see you about —about that little trouble at the vestry meeting last night."

"How did you know that there was trouble?"

"Oh, it came to me pretty straight," replied Barry.

"Everybody knows it," added Miss Chichester.

"The vestry should have been more discreet," said the rector. "But no matter. What is it you wish to say about the meeting?"

"I want to say," replied Barry, "that I heartily disapprove of disturbances of that kind in a vestry meeting."

"I'm glad to hear you say so. So do I." The rector smiled as he spoke, and nodded his approval.

"Yes," continued Barry. "A vestry should always act harmoniously, I may say unanimously. There should, however, be a strong hand to guide them. I'm inclined to stand for election to the vestry myself, next Easter. I think I could be of a good deal of service."

"That's a splendid idea," assented Miss Chichester. "Barry has such excellent judgment."

"Yes; thank you, Jane. But," continued Barry, "I understand that the disturbance was brought on by your advocating free pews. Now, you know, Farrar, it would never do to have free pews in Christ Church."

"Don't you think so?"

"Of course not. Just imagine who might come and

sit with you. Such a fellow as Bricky Hoover, for instance, who works in our mill, and thinks he has a right to go anywhere. I tell you, Farrar, it's impossible. Utterly impossible!"

"I'm sorry you don't approve of it."

"And, in a general way, don't you know, I don't approve of your attitude toward the laboring classes. As a prominent parishioner, a leading citizen, and as vice-president of the Malleson Manufacturing Company, I must respectfully suggest that it is—a—extremely inappropriate for the rector of Christ Church to join with the lower classes in the attack on wealth and—a—culture, and all those things, you know. I speak as a friend, Farrar. As one man of high social grade to another man of high social grade. You see?"

"I understand. I'm glad to have the opinion of any of my parishioners on my sermons or conduct."

Barry felt that he was making a conquest; that the rector was swinging around to his views.

"You see," he went on, flicking an imaginary speck of dust, as he spoke, from the surface of an immaculate waistcoat, "we of the upper classes are responsible for the preservation and advancement in the world, of art, literature, beauty and, I may say, of religion; and it becomes our duty ——"

Here Miss Chichester interrupted him to say:

"Excuse me, Barry; I just want to ask Mr. Farrar if Mrs. Farrar is at home. If she is, I would dearly love to have a five minutes' chat with her."

"She's at home," was the reply; "up-stairs, I think. I'll ask Stella."

The maid came in response to his ring, and was sent to inquire if Mrs. Farrar would see Miss Chichester. She returned in a minute to say that Mrs. Farrar would be delighted, if Miss Chichester wouldn't mind going up-stairs to the nursery, where Mrs. Farrar was temporarily engaged. Of course Miss Chichester wouldn't mind. It would be her first glimpse of the nursery

which she had long been curious to see. She found Mrs. Farrar there in temporary charge of the youngest member of the family who had just fallen asleep.

"What a lovely child!" exclaimed Miss Chichester in a whisper, bending over the crib.

"Yes, he's a dear. He doesn't mind in the least having people talk in the room when he's asleep," said Mrs. Farrar.

"How comforting that is!" Miss Chichester took a chair near the window where she could look out across the rectory lawn to the street. "We missed you so at the Parish Aid Society Tuesday afternoon at Ruth Tracy's. You weren't ill, were you?"

"Oh, no. Mr. Farrar discovered another poor family up in the eight hundred block. The mother's bedridden, and nothing would do but I must go up and see her Tuesday afternoon."

"How kind Mr. Farrar is to the poor. What a pity it is that the vestry isn't in sympathy with him in his concern for the lower classes."

"Isn't it? I didn't know."

"I'm told it isn't. That's what led to the trouble last evening."

"What trouble, Miss Chichester?"

"Why, the trouble at the vestry meeting. Hasn't Mr. Farrar told you about it?"

"Not a word. He rarely tells me about unpleasant happenings; they worry me so. What was the trouble at the vestry meeting?"

"Perhaps I ought not to tell you, either."

"Oh, I suppose I'll hear about it sooner or later; you might as well tell me." She settled herself back in her chair with a sigh.

"Well, they all got into a dreadful quarrel."

"Is it possible? What about?"

"About free pews. Mr. Farrar wanted the pews declared free, and they all opposed him but Mr. Emberly and Mr. Hazzard."

"I'm so sorry! Robert is so far ahead of the times. Did Mr. Westgate oppose him?"

"Yes; Mr. Westgate and Mr. Hughes, and Mr. Claybank ——"

"And Judge Bosworth?"

"Yes, Judge Bosworth, and—oh, all of the best men in the vestry. Isn't it too bad!"

"It's pitiful!" She sighed again, and her face grew a little paler and more anxious. "I hope there were no harsh words used, Miss Chichester. I couldn't stand it to have any one speak harshly to Mr. Farrar."

"Why, yes, I believe some very harsh words were used—not by your husband, my dear; he's a gentleman. But they—now really, I mustn't tell you this."

"But I want to know. No matter how dreadful it is."

"Well, they demanded Mr. Farrar's resignation as rector."

"Miss Chichester!"

"Yes, and then withdrew the demand. And then Mr. Emberly and Mr. Hazzard got very angry and said some dreadful things, and —— Oh, Mrs. Farrar, really I must not tell you any more."

"Go on, please; let me hear it all."

"Well, if I must tell it; these gentlemen and Mr. Hughes and Colonel Boston said shocking things to each other, and they were going to fight ——"

"To fight! in the vestry meeting!"

"Yes, actually to fight. And Mr. Westgate and Mr. Farrar stepped between them and prevented it, and they had to adjourn the meeting before they were through, in order to avoid more trouble."

"How dreadful!"

"Isn't it dreadful! But you mustn't take my word for it, Mrs. Farrar. I'm only telling you what I heard, and just as I heard it. It's so unfortunate that all the best men in the vestry should be so bitterly opposed to Mr. Farrar."

"Do you think they are, Miss Chichester? Do you really think they are unfriendly to Mr. Farrar?"

There was an appealing tone in the woman's voice that should have gone straight to Miss Chichester's heart, and led her into making some effort to repair the havoc she had already wrought; but Miss Chichester was enjoying too deeply the sensation she was creating to take much note of the pain she was giving to her listener.

"I'm afraid they are, Mrs. Farrar," she replied. "I'm afraid they will make it very uncomfortable for Mr. Farrar if he insists on trying to carry out his projects. I do hope he'll abandon them, if it's necessary to do it in order to avoid trouble in the church."

The child in the crib stirred and moaned in its sleep, and the mother went to it and readjusted its position and murmured some soothing words to it, and returned to her chair.

"I am so sorry," she said.

"Indeed, it is terrible," assented Miss Chichester. "I thought I must come in and give you what little comfort I could. I brought Barry Malleson along, and he's down-stairs with Mr. Farrar now, trying to prevail on him not to antagonize the vestrymen any more. Barry isn't a communicant, you know, but he's a man of such good judgment."

"Is he?"

"Oh, very."

"I do hope Mr. Farrar will listen to him."

Miss Chichester rose to take her departure, but it was five minutes later before she actually got away, and when she went down-stairs Barry had already gone. He had not accomplished all that he had hoped to accomplish when he came, but he felt that he had made it so clear to the rector that he was on the wrong track that his restoration to reason and good judgment would necessarily soon follow.

But, while Barry left behind him a smiling, self-confident and optimistic host, Miss Chichester left in her wake a woman on whom the shock of disclosure had fallen with grievous and humiliating force. She had feared that something of the kind might happen, but she had never thought that it would come like this. She could not quite believe that the best people in the parish were in direct opposition to her husband; that gentlemen of the vestry who had always treated her with such marked courtesy and consideration could be so openly antagonistic toward him. And if it were all true, in what a cruel position was she herself placed. By birth, breeding and social alignment she belonged to the cultured class. She shirked none of the duties of a rector's wife, so far as her physical and mental ability enabled her to perform those duties. She was devoted to her husband, her children and her Church. It was true that the new, and to her strange and incomprehensible, ideas promulgated by her husband concerning the duty of the Church and its adherents toward the humble and the poor gave her some anxiety when she heard them or thought about them; but she considered herself so ignorant in such matters, and regarded him as being so wise, that she usually preferred to dismiss the subject from her mind rather than to dwell upon it to her own confusion. Up to this time his attitude had not interfered in any way with her Church activities or her social relaxations. It had caused her no great embarrassment, nor had it given her any particular concern. But now a point had been reached beyond which the attempted carrying out of his policy must inevitably reflect upon her. If Miss Chichester's story was true, the situation had grown suddenly acute. The most prominent men of the Church had come out in open rebellion against her husband. Their wives would naturally sympathize with them and side with them. They belonged to the class in which all of her social activities had been performed, and all

of her social friendships maintained. How could she hope to hold her position among these people and at the same time remain loyal to her husband? It was a cruel dilemma in which she had, by no fault of her own, been suddenly and rudely placed.

At dinner time that evening her husband noticed her apparent distraction and despondency, and inquired of her concerning the cause of it. She successfully evaded his questions, and it was not until after the children had been put to bed that she repeated to him the tale that Miss Chichester had told to her that afternoon. He assured her that she had heard a grossly exaggerated account of what had actually taken place, but in its really material aspects he could not do otherwise than confirm the story. He did not consider, he said, that the opposition to his plans would necessarily lead to their suppression.

"I may never be able," he added, "to induce my vestry to act with me in these matters; nevertheless I shall not relax my effort to make Christ Church a haven for 'all sorts and conditions of men.'"

"I suppose you are right about it, Robert," she replied. "Of course you are. I must take your judgment in these matters because I don't know anything about them myself, and I've never been able to understand them. But it seems so sad to me, and so—so humiliating that it was necessary to antagonize all these people who have been such dear friends to us ever since we've been here."

"You take a narrow view of the situation, Alice. The question is not whether we are going to keep or lose friends; but it is whether I am right or wrong. If I am right, as I truly believe I am, then nothing, no opposition, no antagonism, no suffering of any kind should swerve me from my course. If these people are antagonistic, the antagonism is theirs. I have only the kindliest feeling toward all of them."

"But, Robert, it seems to me that it is so necessary

to keep them friendly to us, and interested in the Church. What would we do without them?"

"I want to keep them interested in the Church and friendly to us, and I believe I shall. But the Church should not be exclusively for them. They are already receiving all of the benefits which the Church has to offer, while outside there is a great multitude of the Churchless who are spiritually starving and dying for want of just such aid as I am forbidden by these vestrymen to hold out to them. I must choose my own path, and I believe my paramount duty is not to the comfortably situated within the Church but to the physically and spiritually poor without it."

"I know, Robert, but couldn't we visit the poor, and supply their needs, and be kind and charitable to them in every way, and try to get them to the services and into the Church without taking them in as our social equals?"

"No, Alice; that method has been tried for ages, and the working classes are drifting farther and in larger numbers away from us. If we want them in the Church we must welcome them there as our equals. There's no other way to get them or to keep them. And there must be not only social equality in the Church, there must be a fair measure of economic equality outside. Our wealthy churchmen must set the first example of economic justice, and cease piling up great individual fortunes at the expense of the men who labor. I tell you this control of the wealth of the world by a few, and this control of the Church by those wealthy few, is so unjust and so unchristian that ——"

"Oh, Robert, don't! I can't understand those arguments; I never could. I'll admit that you are right. But what worries me is what our relations are going to be with these people who are so opposed to us, and who have been our good friends."

"We shall still be friendly to them."

"But what if they won't be friendly to us?"

"That will be their loss; and one more assurance, to my mind, that we are doing the will of our Master."

"That's easy enough to say; but how can you manage to carry on the work of the Church without the aid of Judge Bosworth, and Mr. Claybank, and Philip Westgate, and all those men who have always been so helpful and so—so splendid in every way?"

"You're crossing your bridges before you get to them. These men have not withdrawn their help. If the time comes that they do, another way will be found to carry on the work. This is one of the least of the problems that confront me."

"But, Robert, what will I do without the friendship and society of Mrs. Bosworth and Mrs. Claybank and Philip Westgate's mother, and all the other ladies who have been so perfectly lovely to me ever since I've been here? I can be good to women of another social grade, but I can't associate with them, and I must have my friends."

At last her grievance and her fear had formed definite expression. The one was personal and the other was selfish. She never rose above the level of her domestic and social environment. She never caught even a glimpse of the things for which he was fighting, as they presented themselves to his spiritual vision. He tossed his head impatiently as he replied:

"I do not think you need to borrow trouble. You will not be deserted on my account. But if, by any chance, matters should come to such a pass that you are socially outlawed because of my adherence to my duties as a Christian minister, then I trust you will accept the situation with fortitude, in the spirit of the martyrs, in order to advance the cause for which I shall be fighting."

"That's all very well for you to say, Robert. But you're a man and you can go out and fight and forget. And I'm a woman, and I'll have to stay at home, ostracized and deserted, and grieve myself to death. I was

never intended to be a martyr, and I can't be! I can't be!"

"Then you shouldn't have married a clergyman who believes in the sacredness of his calling."

It was an unkind thing for him to say, and he knew it the moment the words had left his lips, and he regretted that he had said them. He saw her face pale, and a hurt look come into her eyes, but she did not appear to be angry. He rose, crossed over to where she was sitting, and bent down and kissed her.

"There, dear," he said, "I'm sorry if I hurt you. We won't talk about it any more, and we'll hope for the best."

She laid her hand in his; but it was evident, from the look on her face, that the hurt remained, and that she found little comfort in his expression of regret.

"I must go out now," he added after a moment, "and make a sick call—Rodney McAllister, you know. And when I come back I'll go over my sermon for tomorrow."

He got his hat, and she helped him on with his overcoat, and kissed him good-bye at the door, but over them both there was a shadow of restraint of which they had seldom been aware during the years of their married life.

It was too bad, he thought, as he descended the steps of the rectory, crossed the lawn, and went down the pavement in the shadow of the church, that his wife had not the energy and the desire to join him, not only in his campaign for souls outside, but also in his crusade for righteousness within the Church. If she could only see beyond the circle of her daily life, if she could only understand and appreciate the things he stood for and fought for, if only she were an inspiration to him instead of a retarding force, with what added courage and enthusiasm, with what relentless perseverance and unconquerable energy could he not push forward to the accomplishment of his glorious purpose.

Not that he intended to be disloyal to her, even in his remotest thought. She was charming as a woman, she was devoted as a wife, she was ideal as a mother, but—it was such a pity that she could not see the visions that he saw, and help him to realize them. If she had but the zeal and ability and view-point of Ruth Tracy, for instance. Ah! There was a woman who was created for a rector's wife. And she was to marry a layman; a kind-hearted and brilliant, but conservative layman, who would doubtless check her aspiration toward the larger righteousness, and bind her with the chains of deadening custom. It was unfortunate; it was, in a way, deplorable; but it was one of those unpreventable situations with which only providence might dare to interfere. He heaved a sigh of regret, quickened his pace, and went forward to the accomplishment of his errand.

On his way back from Rodney McAllister's, as he passed down the main street of the city, he came to Carpenter's Hall. Inside the hall a public meeting was in progress. It had been called by certain labor leaders for the purpose of discussing and deciding upon the attitude of labor in the political campaign then fairly under way. Those who were wise in such things said that the socialists were back of it. The minister stopped to read the poster announcing the meeting, and when he had read it it occurred to him that he would enter the hall and listen to the speeches. He might learn something which would be of benefit to him, on a subject in which he was deeply interested. It was late when he pushed his way into the auditorium, and several of the speakers had already been heard. Representatives of trade-unionism, of socialism, even of syndicalism, had been duly applauded and occasionally hissed as they presented their views in turn to their audience. Representatives and candidates of the old-line parties had been excluded from the speaker's platform.

At the moment when Mr. Farrar entered the hall Stephen Lamar was occupying the rostrum. It was apparent that he had the crowd with him. His crude eloquence always captured the audience that he saw fit to address. He was a trade-unionist, and one of the leaders of the large and growing body of socialists in the city, though his views were somewhat too radical to please all of them. However, his influence, his power and his leadership were recognized, not only by workingmen who went to him for advice, but also by politicians who went to him for aid and counsel.

The rector of Christ Church was recognized by some of those who were crowding the aisles, and they made way for him so that he might get farther to the front where he could both see and hear. One man rose and offered him a seat, for the benches were filled; but he preferred to stand.

The gist of Lamar's argument was that while trade-unionism was a good thing so far as it went—he himself was a trade-unionist—it did not go far enough. It was only through socialism, and through political action under the auspices of the socialist party that the workingman would be finally disenthralled. Socialism was the only instrument under heaven which labor could successfully use to enforce its demands upon society. If conservative socialism was not sufficient to accomplish that end, then radical socialism must be employed, and if radical socialism should prove to be insufficient, then resort must be had to syndicalism. In any event, at whatever cost, the capitalist must go. The era of the industrial commonwealth must be ushered in. And with that era would come peace and plenty, comfort and enjoyment, the luxuries of life to all who cared to have them. But this glorious end could not be accomplished without a struggle, and a fierce one. If labor was ever to release itself from the burden of such laws as made John Bradley's disappointment and death a crime against humanity, it must turn deaf ears to the

specious pleas of the old line politicians, it must wholly disregard the silly vaporings of the capitalistic press, it must shake itself free from the grasp of religious superstition and the benumbing influence of the Church, and, by its own unaided power, with the red flag of fellowship in the van, march on, as it surely had the power to do, to a splendid and overwhelming victory.

There was a whirlwind of applause. An enthusiastic adherent of the labor leader yelled:

"Go it, Steve! Give it to 'em! Give 'em hell!"

Before the last word was out of his mouth a stalwart Irishman, sitting well to the front of the hall, struggled to his feet and made himself heard.

"I object," he shouted, "to this attack on religion. It ain't nicessary and it ain't dacent. Ye're doin' small favor to the workin'men, Steve Lamar, to be ladin' 'em away from the Church. I'm a laborin' man mesilf, and I know there's nothin' like religion to steady a man an' put heart into 'im, an' give 'im a stomach to fight for what's due 'im from them that's robbin' 'im. Ye're usin' the divil's logic, Steve, to desthroy the poor."

In an instant the hall was in an uproar. A dozen men were on their feet demanding to be heard. It was only by continuous pounding with the heavy gavel that the chairman of the meeting was able to restore order to a sufficient degree to permit Lamar, stung by the Irishman's criticism, to go on with his speech.

"I had concluded my address," he said, when finally he was able to make himself heard, "but, in view of the interruption which has just occurred, I will say one word more. My friend, the objector, is evidently an adherent of a Church that puts a ban on socialism, and stands ready to give absolution on account of all sins, save the sin of making war on capital. Advanced socialism has no room within it for the pious creeds. Listen to what the leaders have declared. Karl Marx said: 'The idea of God must be destroyed!' Engel said: 'The first word of religion is a lie.' Bebel de-

clared: 'Socialism denies religion altogether.' My friends, the best thinkers and the most brilliant leaders in the socialistic propaganda have pronounced against religion and the Church. I take my stand with them. It is the economic, the materialistic interpretation of history that is the key to human happiness, not the religious and the ecclesiastical. What the workingman wants is justice, not prayers; the full value of the product of his own toil, not pious charity. Capital controls and orders the Church, and muzzles the bishops and priests. Why, they dare not preach even the gospel proclaimed by the Carpenter of Nazareth whom they affect to adore, lest their masters be offended. I tell you the workingman who permits himself to be bamboozled by the preachers and the priests, and bribed by the so-called charity of the Church, is a short-sighted fool. He is forging the very chains that are to bind him. Away with the Church! Away with religion! Use your own brains and your own consciences, and your own good right arms, if necessary, to work out your own salvation. Only so will you ever be free."

Lamar stepped down from the platform amidst another storm of applause, not unmingled with vigorous protests. It was apparent that there were those in the audience who disagreed with him. Then, out of the confusion of voices, one voice rose, clear and distinct. The rector turned to look at the speaker, who stood not far from him, and at once recognized the man as Samuel Major, who had been Juror No. 7 in the Bradley case.

"Mr. Chairman," shouted Major, "I believe this attack on religion and the Church should be answered. And it should be answered now, in the presence of those who have heard it. The Reverend Robert Farrar, rector of Christ Church and a friend of labor, is here in the audience, and I call on him to take the stand in defense of religion and the Church."

The suggestion met with both approval and disap-

proval. A man with full black beard and black hair falling on his shoulders arose and called out:

"Mr. Presiden': Thees ees politique assembly, not prayer-meeting. We weesh that no clergy deescourse with us. I say ratha' put that preach' out."

But the sense of fair play that governs all American audiences seized now upon this one, and immediately there were cries of: "No! No! Give the preacher a chance! Farrar! Farrar!"

The cry deepened into a roar. The demand was insistent. Half the audience was on its feet yelling for "Farrar!" He was not unknown to most of them. The story of his sermons had gone abroad. They wanted to see him and to hear him. The chairman wavered, turned to consult with one of the vice-presidents of the meeting, and then called to the clergyman to come to the platform. It was an invitation that could not be refused, nor had the rector of Christ Church any thought of refusing it. Resenting Lamar's assault on Christianity, he welcomed the opportunity to reply to it. He made his way to the rostrum, mounted the steps, and turned and faced the audience now grown remarkably still. He was stalwart, clean-cut, fine featured. His garments were not of the clerical type. He appealed to the eyes of those who looked on him before he had spoken a word.

"My friends," he said, "I accept your invitation gladly. I want to deny the charges made against religion and the Church by the last speaker. I believe, with the man who replied to him from the floor, that the great need of the workingman to-day is the need of religion and the Church. Physical comforts are not the sole foundation for the happiness of mankind. History can never be properly interpreted from its economical side alone. There can be no just interpretation of it that leaves out God. Before food was, before clothes or homes or gold or silver were, before this world itself was, God was. And after all these

things have vanished, God will still be. It is the conception of God in the souls of men, broadening, brightening, growing as the ages have grown, that has lifted man out of the ranks of the savage and brute and has made of him an enlightened human being, demanding good food, good clothes, good homes, and all the comforts and amenities of life. And we of the Christian Church believe that Jesus Christ was the inspired and final interpreter of all the wisdom of God. He was born in a manger. In childhood He felt the pinch of poverty. In early manhood He was a carpenter, working with saw and hammer as many of you are working to-day. He dwelt with the proletariat. Their problems and sufferings were His. He knew the poor and He loved them and strove for them. He had no soft word to say for the rich. If ever there was a guide, a leader, a saviour for the toilers of the world, that leader and saviour is Jesus Christ. He founded a Church upon earth and that Church is still a vital force and a mighty factor in the lives of men, even though, in its course through the centuries, it has fallen now and then from the lofty height on which He placed it. Restored and lifted up, it stands to-day the authorized agent of Christ on earth. That Church is as much for you as it is for your wealthy neighbor. Aye, more for you than for him, because yours is the greater need. Avail yourselves of its privileges. As rector of Christ Church I invite you to come to our services, to unite yourselves with us, to partake of all the privileges we enjoy. Do not let the fear of intrusion hinder you, nor any coldness of welcome on the part of the wealthy prevent you from coming. The place is yours, and its privileges are yours, and as children of God you have a right to enjoy them. And so far as I can control it, there shall be no class distinction there, no line of demarcation between the rich and the poor; but every man shall be the equal of every other man, and all be brothers in Christ.

"My friends, I am a Christian socialist. I believe in your ideals of justice, of equality, of economic independence, and I shall rejoice with you when all those ideals have been crystallized into law. But do not deceive yourselves with the notion that you can accomplish these things without God. Do not make the mistake of attempting to realize your hopes without the aid of religion, for you will never succeed. Rob socialism of the things that hinder and debase it. Vivify it and glorify it with the religion of Jesus Christ who was the one great socialist of all the ages, and your cause cannot fail; the dawn of that splendid day of which you dream, and for which I pray, will not then be far removed from any one of us."

It was his appearance, his evident sincerity, his magnetic personality, no less than the words he uttered, that caught the audience and carried it with him. They might not yield to his appeal, they might not follow his advice, but from that moment, to the vast majority of them, he was something more than *persona grata.*

As he came down from the platform and made his way to the rear of the hall a great roar of applause shook the walls of the building, and many men stopped him in the aisle to shake hands with him, and to thank him for coming to their meeting, and for addressing them thus intimately from their own platform.

After that night the toilers of the whole city counted the Reverend Robert Farrar as their friend and advocate, and a protagonist of their cause.

CHAPTER VIII

A SIGNIFICANT DINNER PARTY

DISAPPOINTMENT was in store for those who came to Christ Church on the Sunday morning following the vestry meeting in the expectation of hearing a continuance of the rector's sermons on the duty of the rich toward the poor, and of the poor toward the Church.

No larger congregation had gathered there at any time during the two years' pastorate of the Reverend Mr. Farrar. Pews that, by reason of the voluntary absence of disaffected parishioners, would otherwise have been vacant, were filled by curious and interested persons who seldom went to any church. Long before the Venite was reached in the order of service every seat was occupied.

But the sermon, forceful and eloquent though it was, dealt only with the parable of the talents, and the lesson to be drawn from it. Nevertheless the humble folk who listened to it went away, for the most part, feeling that they had partaken of something that satisfied and strengthened them.

There was some discussion among his parishioners as to whether the rector had, after all, decided to comply with the expressed wish of his vestrymen, and forego his public criticism of the existing social order. Some of them said, with a knowing smile, that discretion was often the better part of valor. They did not know the man. Nor had they, as yet, heard of his brief address at the labor meeting in Carpenter's Hall the evening before. When, later, they did hear of it, they were indignant. In their judgment it was utterly inexcusable for the rector of Christ Church to take the stump

at a political meeting, held under the auspices of avowed agitators, for the purpose of proclaiming to the non-churchgoing public his social heresies, and of inviting the rabble to make itself indiscriminately at home in the stately pews, and among the exclusive worshipers of Christ Church. Truly he had belittled his calling, and mocked his vestry and affronted his people. The bishop should be notified of his conduct without delay. But the Reverend Mr. Farrar, having fully decided upon his course, did not permit himself to be swerved from it by adverse criticism. He had expected opposition, therefore he was not disappointed when he received it in abundance. He had never thought that his path would be unblocked. He was prepared to suffer for the cause he had espoused. He was ready, if necessary, to be socially ostracized if his opponents saw fit to emphasize their opposition in that manner. But he wished that his wife might be spared. She was so sensitive, so weak, so timid and soft-hearted, so dependent on the companionship and favor of those who were now, for the most part, out of sympathy with him. It was an unfortunate situation. Again the regret that she was not of the stuff of which martyrs are made passed uneasily across his mind. And on the heels of his regret there came an invitation that was not only a reassurance to her, but might also be interpreted as a token of sympathy with him. The rector and his wife were asked to dine at the Tracys' with a few friends. As to Mr. Tracy, the invitation was without significance so far as it bore any relation to recent events. He never concerned himself about controversies in the Church. He never discussed religious topics with any one. The only kind of an opinion that could be obtained from him was a professional opinion, duly considered, delivered and paid for. With his wife of course it was different. She had an opinion ready on every question that arose, and she was never averse to expressing it.

Reading between the lines the rector could see that Mrs. Tracy's purpose in giving the invitation was to reassure Mrs. Farrar as to her social standing, notwithstanding her husband's heresies. And, reading still farther between the lines, he believed that Ruth had in mind his own encouragement in the course he was pursuing. He had not seen her since the night of the vestry meeting, but word had come to him that she was loyally supporting him in his interpretation of true religion, and in his idea of the mission of the Church. And why should she not support him? He had fully expected it of her. She was alert, intelligent, conscientious, in complete accord with that spirit of the times which made for progress. Somewhere she had imbibed ideas of social justice that did not fit in harmoniously with the practical if unstudied programme of her mother. Mrs. Tracy declared that she had imbided them at Bryn Mawr, from which institution she had been graduated with high honors in the recent past. But Mr. Tracy intimated that they were due to a tendency that she had inherited from certain of her paternal ancestors who had been distinguished members of the proletariat of their day. Be that as it may, her advocacy of a reformation in the social order was open and well known, not only to her intimates but to all of her friends. Philip Westgate was the only one of them who refused to take her seriously. To him her reformatory activity was only a manifestation of an exuberance of youth and conscience which would soon exhaust itself in the face of unrewarded tasks. She was too charming as a woman to remain long as a reformer.

Mr. Farrar had guessed, with reasonable accuracy, the respective purposes which Mrs. Tracy and her daughter had in mind in sending out their dinner invitations. It was true that Mrs. Tracy, sympathizing deeply with the rector's wife, desired to show her some attention of sufficient moment to indicate to her that

her social position was intact. She said as much to her daughter Ruth in proposing the dinner.

"I think it's an excellent idea," replied Ruth, "to have Mr. and Mrs. Farrar here. They are both delightful people, and at this time especially they ought to be made to feel at home in every one of our houses."

"Oh," responded the mother, "I have no sympathy for Mr. Farrar. He deserves to have a social ban placed on him. He's making himself so perfectly ridiculous and—and obnoxious; yes, really obnoxious. I don't see what he can possibly be thinking about. I'm going to tell him so if he comes, and I'm going to do it openly and aboveboard. But as for his dear little wife, she must be protected against the consequences of his folly so far as we are able to protect her. Don't you think so?"

"I don't think it's folly on his part, mother; I think it's bravery. But, whatever it is, she should not suffer. Whom shall we invite to meet them?"

"That's what worries me. So many of the best people have taken umbrage at what Mr. Farrar's been preaching that really I don't know to whom he would be acceptable."

"Why not risk Mr. and Mrs. Claybank? or Colonel Boston and his wife?"

"Oh, dear me! Colonel Boston and Mr. Claybank can't endure the man. Jane Chichester said that both of them got fairly wild at the vestry meeting when he insisted on his free pew nonsense."

"Well, if you want some one who agrees with him, there are Mr. and Mrs. Hazzard, and Mr. Emberly and his sister."

"Ruth! What are you thinking of? Such ordinary people! Neither of those women is on my calling list, and I haven't even a speaking acquaintance with the men. I haven't swallowed Mr. Farrar's ideas of social equality yet; besides, this dinner is not on his account;

it's on Mrs. Farrar's. I feel so sorry for her. Jane Chichester says she suffers terribly from what people say about her husband. Jane went to see her, you know, and tried to comfort her."

"I think I'd rather have one of Job's comforters than to have Jane if I were in distress."

"I know she's a dreadful gossip. But she means well; and she does an immense amount of church work. I think I'll invite Jane. She ought to be perfectly acceptable to both Mr. and Mrs. Farrar. And the Chichesters are one of the oldest and best families in the city."

"Very well, mother. I'm satisfied. Who else?"

"Of course Phil and his mother. That goes without saying. Jane says that Phil actually prevented a fight the night of the vestry meeting."

"Oh, mother! That's nonsense! Nobody thought of fighting. Phil told me all about it after the exaggerated and ridiculous story had spread all over the city. But Phil is a natural peacemaker, and while he doesn't agree with Mr. Farrar, I'm sure he is on friendly terms with him."

"Well, why not invite Judge and Mrs. Bosworth? I understand the judge's attitude toward Mr. Farrar is about the same as Philip's."

"I think they will do nicely. But now you should have another man."

"That's true! Let me see! I have it; I'll invite Barry!"

"Mother! Barry is so impossible as a dinner guest!"

"Why? He belongs to the wealthiest family in the city. He is of excellent character and has the manners of a gentleman."

"But his brains, mother, his brains!"

"I'll admit that nature was not over lavish to Barry in that respect, but he'll do very well indeed. And besides it will please Jane to have him here."

"Yes, I suppose it will. Jane seems to be pursuing him with great avidity."

"And why shouldn't she? Barry would make her a very good husband. The marriage would unite two of the best families. Besides, you didn't want him yourself, why should you object to some other girl having him?"

"I don't object. Jane is quite welcome to him so far as I'm concerned, but—poor Barry! Think of what he'd have to listen to."

"Well, if he's like most men, what his wife would say would go in at one ear and out at the other, anyway."

"Yes, and in Barry's case the passage from one ear to the other would be so easy—nothing to interfere, you know."

"Ruth! To talk that way about your guests! It's positively sinful!"

"Well, I apologize. And I'm quite willing to admit that Barry has his good points. But so many of them lie dormant, and Jane Chichester would never be the woman to bring them out. I'll tell you what Barry needs, mother. He needs a wife, not necessarily of the cultured class, but one who can supply what he lacks in intellect, and who is sufficiently forceful and tactful to use him and his social position for the benefit of themselves and the city. As he is now, unmarried, he is more or less of a joke. With Jane Chichester as his wife, he would become practically a nonentity. With such a woman as I would pick out for him, his position and his happiness would be assured."

"But where is the woman?"

"Oh, I haven't the least idea. I haven't so much as —mother!"

"Well, what is it?"

"I have a thought."

"About what?"

"About whom Barry should marry."

"Yes, you've just expressed it."

"But I mean that I have the particular person in mind."

"Well, who is it?"

"Why, it's Mrs. —— How foolish of me! I'll not mention her name. I have no right to. And I know very little about her anyway."

"Is she a widow?"

"Yes; and very beautiful. I have seen her. And she is said to be very bright mentally. There, never mind; have we settled on the guests?"

"Yes. Phil and his mother, Judge and Mrs. Bosworth, Jane and Barry, to meet Mr. and Mrs. Farrar. That's enough. I think Mrs. Farrar would dread a larger company. But about Barry ——"

"I'm through talking about Barry, mother."

"Well, then, about Jane ——"

"I'm through talking about Jane also."

"Then write the invitations."

Mr. and Mrs. Farrar came early on the evening of the dinner party. None of the other guests had yet arrived. Mrs. Tracy went up-stairs with the rector's wife. Mr. Tracy was still engaged in the laborious task of getting into his dinner coat. So Ruth and the rector entered the library alone.

"I've been wanting to tell you," said Ruth, "how thoroughly I approve of your recent stand for social equality in the Church. You've known my opinion, of course, but, in view of the adverse criticisms I'm afraid you've been receiving, I thought you might like to know it again."

"I am glad to know it again," responded the rector, "and you are very kind to give it to me. I value it because you know whereof you speak. Both theoretically and practically you know the needs of the poor, and the suspicions and aspirations of those in the humbler classes of society."

"And I know, too, that we shall never get those

people into the Church, nor keep them if we do get them, until we treat them as equals. I quite agree with you that the first thing to do is to make all pews free."

"I am fully convinced of that, but I fear that I shall not be able to get my vestry to agree with me."

"Then we will elect a vestry that will agree with you."

"That is easier said than done."

"I'll turn politician for the purpose. I'll canvass the parish before the Easter election. I'm determined to do what I can to abolish class distinctions in Christ Church. Mother says I'm a fanatic. Phil more than half suspects that she is right. Father doesn't care."

"You seem to have enlisted for the war."

"I have. I'm at your command. I'm ready for any practical service to which you wish to put me. I'm tired of seeing Christ Church a mere fashionable Sunday club. I want to help make it a religious home for everybody."

"You are very brave and generous. But I'm afraid you haven't counted the cost."

"What will it cost?"

"Possibly your social standing."

"I can afford to lose that."

"You will have to face opposition, ridicule, protest, misinterpretation of your motives."

"No doubt. But these things do not worry me in the least. Mr. Farrar, my mind is made up. You cannot discourage me, nor drive me out of this contest. I shall be with you—to the end."

She stood in the soft glow of the shaded lamp, a picture of resolute and splendid young womanhood; a modern Joan of Arc, as brave-souled and pure-spirited as her prototype of old. The rector of Christ Church stepped forward and took the hand she held out to him.

"You are an inspiration," he said; "you have filled

me with fresh courage to-night. We shall fight together. I believe God will give us the victory."

Her hand lay in his, warm, firm, clinging; pledge of her loyalty to him and of her faith in his ideals.

"There is one matter of immediate concern," he added, after a moment, "in which I want to ask your assistance."

"You shall have it."

"Thank you! You remember the Bradley case in court? The one that resulted in an enforced verdict?"

"Very well, indeed. I have fought it over with Phil several times. But I can't convince him that the verdict was unjust."

"I feel that it was. You know Bradley died?"

"Yes; and I know you said things at his burial for which his fellow-workmen have been commending you ever since. His widow declined to receive you, did she not?"

"She did. That is why I come to you for help. I want to ask if you would be willing to call on her. She is a woman of great strength of character, unusually intelligent, and has much influence in her own community. She came to church on one or two occasions prior to her husband's death, and she was present at the service last Sunday morning. While she is interested in the Church, she is distinctly hostile to it. I wish greatly that her attitude of hostility might be changed into one of at least friendliness, both for her own good and for the influence which she can command."

"I will call on her. I shall be very glad to. She is an unusual woman in appearance. I have heard that she is unusual also in character and ability. I'll do my best to persuade her."

"Thank you again. That's splendid!"

What a comfort she was! What an inspiration! What a pity that she was not the wife, not to become the wife of a progressive rector of an advancing church!

Mrs. Tracy swept into the room, with Mrs. Farrar in tow.

"Oh, here you are!" she exclaimed, giving the rector a warm hand-grasp. "I suppose Ruth has been vowing allegiance to your heresies, Mr. Farrar. I can't get her to look at the matter reasonably, and Philip can't either; and her father just smiles and says she's of age and can do as she wants to."

"You'll have to convert Mr. Farrar first, mother," laughed Ruth, "and then let him convert me."

"It would serve you both right," continued the mistress of the house, "if we had Jim Dodder, the blacksmith, here to dine with you, with his three hundred and fifty pound wife who is bald on the back of her head."

"Oh, mother!" protested Ruth, "she doesn't weigh a bit over two hundred."

"Three hundred if she weighs a pound," insisted Ruth's mother. "Why, when she came the other day to call on our cook, the rocking-chair in the maid's sitting-room collapsed under her."

"And shall that be attributed to her for unrighteousness?" asked the rector.

"Now, Mr. Farrar," remonstrated the hostess, "don't try to evade the issue. You know what I'm driving at. Your ideas of social equality are perfectly ridiculous, I declare! Perfectly ridiculous!"

Mr. Farrar made no attempt to defend himself. Nor did he feel in the least hurt. He was quite accustomed to Mrs. Tracy's blunt, direct way of expressing her opinions. He knew, moreover, that she had the kindest of hearts, and always tempered her criticism with great mercy for her victim.

"Mother's afraid," said Ruth, "that in the new régime she'll have to wear a calico gown and a green sunbonnet to church, so as not to arouse the envy of the proletarians."

"And you'll have to wear them forever, in the New

Jerusalem," retorted Mrs. Tracy, "if you keep on consorting with the lower classes here."

Then Judge and Mrs. Bosworth came, closely followed by Barry and Miss Chichester; and Mr. Tracy, having finally gotten into his evening coat, joined the group in the library.

Every one was cordial to the rector, and more than cordial to the rector's wife. The party bade fair to be all that Mrs. Tracy and Ruth had hoped for it. No untoward event occurred, and no unfortunate remark was made, until the dinner had been more than half served. Then it was Barry Malleson who blundered, as it might have been expected that he would, into what should have been forbidden ground.

He turned to Judge Bosworth, who was sitting diagonally across the table from him and said:

"This is the first opportunity I have had, Judge, to compliment you on the masterly way in which you wound up that Bradley case against us. As vice-president of the Malleson Manufacturing Company I feel personally grateful to you. You will kindly accept my thanks."

The judge's face flushed with the annoyance he felt.

"You owe me nothing," he said, "not even thanks. The law in such cases is well settled. There was no chance for me to do otherwise than as I did."

"Judge," replied Barry, "you are too modest. It was your genius in applying the law so that it should serve the best interests of society that led to the judgment in our favor. The Malleson Manufacturing Company, as the great industrial plant of this city, paying out thousands of dollars weekly in wages, must not be subject to attack by any common laborer who happens to get hurt while in our employ. The lesson which the court has taught to that class of people will doubtless prove to be a most salutary one."

Then Barry, with a sense of duty well performed, resumed activity with his fork. But Judge Bosworth's

face had grown redder, the rector's lips were tightly set, as if in an effort to prevent the escape from them of inadvertent words, and Ruth, fearful of the upsetting of her plans for a harmonious dinner, was nervously tapping the damask cloth with a shapely finger. Miss Chichester, seeing that Barry had unwittingly gotten himself into trouble, felt that it was her instant duty to help him out of it.

"Oh, but Barry's going to give Mrs. Bradley some money anyway, now that her husband's dead. Aren't you, Barry? I call that very generous."

"Yes," replied Barry, "if she'll take it. Something as a gift, you know. Purely as a gift. No obligation connected with it at all."

"A small sum as an honorarium, I suppose, Barry," said Mr. Tracy, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Exactly!" replied Barry, "an honorarium." The word sounded good to him. He meant to stow it away in his memory, for use on some other occasion.

"But what if she won't accept it?" asked Mrs. Tracy. "That kind of people are so very independent."

"Barry intends to keep calling on her and urging her, periodically, until she does accept it. Don't you, Barry?" inquired Westgate. Mr. Tracy and Westgate never seemed able to let escape them a good opportunity of having a little quiet amusement at Barry's expense.

"Why," replied Barry, "it might take one or two more visits to induce her to be reasonable about it, I don't know."

"Well," said Miss Chichester, "if she doesn't take it the second time it's offered to her, she should never have another chance. Barry can't afford to be perpetually chasing after ungrateful people to force money on them. Can you, Barry?"

"But what if Barry enjoys the chase?" asked Westgate.

Then the vice-president of the Malleson Manufactur-

ing Company awoke to a dim consciousness of the fact that he was being made the subject of gentle raillery.

"Oh, now, look here, Phil," he said, "the woman's handsome and all that, you know; but really, belonging, as she does, to the laboring class, it's not to be presumed that she would drive so conservative a man as I am suddenly daft."

"She hasn't driven you suddenly daft, Barry," replied Westgate. "I'm sure that no one who has known you for any length of time would accuse her of having done that."

"Philip," remonstrated Ruth, "behave yourself!"

"And it seems to me," added Mrs. Tracy, "that it's entirely out of place anyway to talk about the attractions of a widow whose husband has only been dead for two or three weeks. A woman so recently bereaved is much more likely to spend her time in prayer and meditation than in making herself attractive to men."

"Mrs. Bradley isn't," said Westgate. "Is she, Mr. Farrar? You've had some talk with her along religious lines."

In spite of Ruth's warning glances, Westgate seemed determined that the conversation should remain centered on Mrs. Bradley.

"I'm afraid," replied the rector seriously, "that Mrs. Bradley is not much given to prayer as yet. But I have strong hope that we shall eventually make a good church-woman of her. With that in view I have asked Miss Tracy to take an early opportunity to call on her."

"Quite proper," said Barry. "I heartily approve of it."

"Oh, Ruth!" exclaimed Miss Chichester, "let me go with you when you go to call."

"No, Jane," replied Ruth firmly, "I think I can do more with her if I see her alone."

It might have ended there if Mrs. Tracy had not seen fit to declare:

"Well, I don't see any use, anyway, in chasing after people of that class to get them into the Church. There's plenty of material to be worked on in our own grade of society. There are enough irreligious persons in our own social set to crowd the church if they could all be induced to attend the services. Mr. Farrar, why don't you and Ruth get after some of the upper-class derelicts? You might start with Effingham G. Tracy."

Mr. Tracy, sitting at the head of the table, smiled faintly but made no response. He did not seem to be in the least concerned about his wife's opinion of him.

"Very good, Mrs. Tracy!" exclaimed Barry. "Very good, indeed! I think, myself, that Mr. Tracy would be a proper subject for evangelization."

Mr. Tracy's smile broadened, but still he did not respond. Like another celebrated character, he could be silent in seven languages. Then Mr. Farrar replied to Mrs. Tracy's question.

"We feel," he said, "that those who have not had the advantages of wealth and education and culture are entitled to our first efforts. The Christian message is primarily to the humble and the poor."

"There you go again," she responded. "'The humble and the poor,' 'equality in the Church' and all that. Upon my word, Mr. Farrar, if you and Ruth had your way we should be hobnobbing to-night with the élite of Factory Hill."

"And why not?" The rector's voice was gentle enough, but there was not one of the company who did not feel the earnest thrill of it, the ring of determination in it, not one, save Barry. He simply noticed that no one else replied to the rector's question, and he considered that it was quite his duty to make a response.

"Oh, now, look here, Farrar," he said. "You don't mean that. Why should we make companions of the kind of people who live on Factory Hill?"

"Because Jesus Christ did."

Even Barry could realize, now, that the rector had picked up the gauntlet thrown down to him by his hostess and her fatuous guest, and stood ready to defend his ideal against all the company. The light in his eye, the color in his cheeks, denoted the spirit and the zeal that were blazing within him. For a moment no one spoke. Mrs. Bosworth sent a warning glance across the table to her husband. Mrs. Farrar's eyes dropped, and her face paled with apprehension. Ruth looked appealingly at her lover, as though to beg him not, at this time, to cross swords with the rector. Even Mrs. Tracy, feeling that the situation was rapidly getting beyond her control, sought some method of gently relieving it. Turning to Barry she said, quietly:

"Now, Barry, don't you and Mr. Farrar get into any argument. It wouldn't be a bit interesting to the rest of us. We're just going to convict Mr. Farrar and Ruth without giving them a chance to make any defense. There, you're convicted, both of you."

"Of what?" asked the rector, smiling again.

"Heaven knows!" responded his hostess. "But I turn you over to Judge Bosworth for sentence."

The judge, falling easily into the drift of Mrs. Tracy's thought, glad to avert what had promised to be a most incongruous and unfortunate incident, rose readily to the occasion.

"Very well," he said. "The sentence of the court is that you, the Reverend Robert Farrar, and you, Miss Ruth Tracy, each pay a visit to Mrs. John Bradley, and undergo an imprisonment in her house at hard labor with her for a period of at least twenty minutes, and that you stand committed to Mr. Tracy's views on church polity until this sentence is complied with."

Westgate broke in at once.

"Your Honor," he said, "my client, Barry Malleson, desires to plead guilty of a similar offense, provided he may receive a similar sentence."

With assumed gravity the judge commanded the prisoner to stand up. Barry rose, looking somewhat bewildered. The comedy was being played rather too rapidly for him to take it completely in as it progressed.

"Barry Malleson," said the judge, "the court accepts your plea of guilty. Your offense is aggravated beyond that of the other defendants, in that, by your own confession, you have offered money to a proletarian, by means of which she might have placed herself on a par with the four hundred of this city. Nor are there any extenuating circumstances in your case. The sentence of the court therefore is that you also pay a visit to Mrs. John Bradley; that you undergo an imprisonment in her house, for a period of at least forty minutes, that you come away with a whole purse and a whole heart; and you are hereby paroled in the custody of Miss Jane Chichester until this sentence is complied with."

"And I'll see," said Miss Chichester, "that Barry doesn't break his parole."

It was most inconsequential foolery, but it served its purpose. The strain was relaxed. The atmosphere was cleared. Mrs. Farrar and Mrs. Bosworth were relieved of their apprehensions, and Ruth was once more at ease. New subjects of conversation were introduced, and the dinner progressed to a happy and harmonious close.

If Mr. Farrar had expected that either Judge Bosworth or Westgate would show any lack of friendliness or loss of cordiality toward him, he was agreeably disappointed. There appeared to be no change in the attitude of either of them. So far as Westgate was concerned he still had a most kindly feeling for the rector. The two men had been on terms of more than usual intimacy. They were nearly of the same age, possessed of similar cultured tastes, endowed with an equal degree of intellectuality. It is true that while

the minister was vigorous, enthusiastic, and perhaps visionary, Westgate was calm, logical and conservative. But their differing traits were complementary, and added to, instead of detracting from, their liking for each other. Westgate had watched, with deep regret, the rector's gradual drift toward the shoals of socialism. He feared that, sooner or later, lured on by these beautiful fallacies which made so strong an appeal to his humanitarian sense, the minister would wreck a career otherwise brilliant with promise. He did not concede that he, himself, was lacking in the broader vision, or that he had failed to discover the drift of humanity toward a better social order. He freely admitted that such a betterment was desirable; but he insisted that progressives and enthusiasts like Farrar were going about the business in an utterly mistaken way, and that the effect of their propaganda would be to retard instead of to advance the coming of the ideal state. He had not yet found the opportunity to have that talk with the rector which he had declared to the vestry he intended to have. It was unfortunate, too, because he expected to leave the city the following day for an extended trip in the West; and after his return it might be too late. Events often follow each other rapidly in affairs like these. While coffee was being served in the library it occurred to him that he might have a brief interview with the minister on this occasion. It would be better than none at all. Excusing themselves on Westgate's plea that he desired to talk over some Church matters with the minister before going West, they entered the den of the master of the house, adjoining the library. Closeted here, with fragrant wreaths of tobacco smoke curling toward the ceiling, the two men plunged at once into friendly combat. They discussed socialism in all of its phases as expounded by its great protagonists, from Marx and Engel down to Spargo and Hillquit.

They dissected the doctrine of the materialistic con-

ception of history, the doctrine of surplus values, of collective ownership, of the distribution of wealth among the workers, in short all of the material doctrines predicated on socialism. But there was little yielding on either side, and they found little common ground. When they advanced, in the argument, to that modified form of socialism advocated by some Christian workers, including Farrar himself, they found still fewer points of agreement. The rector contended that the ideals of socialism were entirely consistent with, and simply an evolution of the doctrines propounded by the Founder of Christianity who was, Himself, distinctly of the leveling type; that the materialism which had been injected into the socialistic philosophy, was due entirely to the personal prejudices, and these in turn to the environment, of some of the great leaders of the movement, and was not inherent in the philosophy itself. He insisted that the anti-religious and unmoral, if not immoral, vagaries that had attached themselves to the socialistic faith could and eventually would be swept away, leaving a body of doctrine which might and ought to be adopted by every sincere advocate of the coming of the kingdom of Christ.

To which Westgate replied that Jesus Christ was not a socialist, that while the government of His time and country was honeycombed with corruption, and brutal in its oppression of the common people, He neither attacked it, nor made any attempt to reform existing political or social conditions. He condemned the rich because the riches of His day were mostly ill-gotten, and He pitied and tried to comfort the poor because they were, of all men of His generation, most miserable. But His chief concern, and His constant plea, was for the spiritual regeneration of the individual man. Moreover, that, since socialism declared the evils of society to be solely the product of blind economic forces, and not, in any sense, the result of individual unrighteousness, and since it denied any spiritual

incentive to good behavior, and made economic justice the sole factor in the establishment of right relations between man and man, it was therefore, and must of necessity be, diametrically opposed, not only to Christianity but to all religions. And its advocacy of freedom from certain moral restraints, particularly the avowed doctrine of practically all of its great propagandists—a doctrine flowing naturally and necessarily from its basic theory—to the effect that the bonds of marriage should be assumed and thrown off, as the amorous fancy of those concerned might dictate, that divorce should be granted freely, without stated cause, at the will of the parties; this in itself was sufficient to put socialism, in any form, outside the pale of the Church, and make it abhorrent to Christian civilization.

So they talked and argued, always in perfect good nature, always with a feeling of personal friendliness, but they reached no common ground. The rector would not yield his idealism. Westgate would not yield his conservatism. Then they came directly to the question of the trouble in the Church. Again Mr. Farrar explained his ambition to make Christ Church a church of the people. He had the kindliest feeling toward all of his parishioners. He would not offend nor hurt any man willingly or wantonly. But his whole heart went out to the hundreds and thousands in the city who were deprived of the benefits and comforts of religion because of the social attitude toward them of those in the churches. There must come a change in Christ Church. He prayed that it might be a peaceful one; but if a conflict should be necessary in order to effect it, then he would welcome the conflict.

Westgate assured him that so far as his concern for the poor and the churchless was concerned he did not stand alone; that he himself was ready to adopt any course that would permanently better their condition, either religious or secular, so long as it did not conflict with the rights and the welfare of the parish at large; but that

he was not willing to sacrifice the mental and physical comfort and self-respect of the bulk of the parishioners for the sake of temporarily gratifying the class-consciousness of a portion of the community that Christ Church could never hope to retain. He pointed out, moreover, in plain terms, the probable result of persistence by the rector in the course which he had marked out. The financial supporters of the church would become lukewarm, or openly antagonistic. The revenues would decrease. The proper work of the church would languish. If the conflict continued, enmity would be aroused, hatred would be engendered, the parish would be split into warring factions, a breach would be opened that years would not serve to close.

"It was proof of the true Messiah," replied the rector, "that the poor had the gospel preached to them. Would you, because of these material dangers which I grant you are imminent, have me fail to do my duty to the poor whom Christ loved?"

"By no means," said Westgate. "But your proper duty to the poor can be performed without sacrificing the interests of the rich and the well-to-do, to whom you also owe a duty, and whose souls may be as precious in the sight of the Almighty as are the souls of the destitute. A soul is a soul, regardless of its physical environment."

"But Christ was the Master and the Judge of souls. And He did not favor the rich. His entire concern was for the poor. I consider my paramount duty, in accordance with His teaching, to be to the poor."

"And in the performance of that supposed duty you are willing to bring about the destruction of Christ Church?"

"My purpose is not to bring about the destruction of Christ Church, but to bring about the destruction of that spirit of selfishness and exclusiveness in the church which is even now destroying it."

It was plain to Westgate that the rector would not

listen to reason, and that argument must give way to action. When he next spoke it was with determination.

"We shall not permit you to send this church to wreck, Mr. Farrar."

"God forbid that I should do so! It is my purpose to make Christ Church bigger, stronger, more spiritual than she has been before in all her history."

"You are a visionary."

"I am a prophet. You shall see."

"Very well."

Westgate rose and discarded the stump of his cigar. "I am not with you; therefore I shall be against you. Let me make that plain."

"I am sorry. You would have been a splendid comrade in the fight."

The rector was going on to say something more, but there came a knock at the door leading to the library, and he opened it. Mrs. Tracy stood there with an inquiring look on her face.

"May I ask," she said, "when this star-chamber session is to end?"

"It is at an end now, Mrs. Tracy," replied Westgate.

"Well, I should hope so," she responded. "Do you men know how long you have been closeted together? Exactly an hour and forty minutes. Ruth and Jane have played all the music they know; Barry's told all the funny stories he can remember; Mrs. Farrar's yawning, and Mrs. Bosworth says she's simply got to go home. So I think it's time for you to come out and apologize."

They did come out and apologize. Westgate took all the blame for their apparent rudeness on his shoulders; and Miss Chichester promised forgiveness if only they would disclose what they had been talking about. She surmised, but she never knew.

At any rate, Mrs. Tracy's purpose in giving the dinner had been accomplished; the apprehensive soul

of Mrs. Farrar had, for the time being, been reassured, and Ruth had had an opportunity to show to Mr. Farrar that he was not yet *persona non grata* to certain of the wealthy members of his parish.

During the few minutes that Westgate had alone with Ruth before leaving the Tracy home, he took occasion to say to her:

"I've had it out with the rector to-night, but he'll not be convinced. I have told him that, in my humble judgment, he is steering Christ Church straight on the rocks."

"I too," she replied, "have talked with him to-night, and I have told him that in my humble judgment he is absolutely in the right, and that I shall be with him to the end."

"Ruth, I am very sorry."

"Why should you be sorry?"

"Because you will not only help this man to wreck the church, but you will do yourself a great injustice."

"The church will not be wrecked, and I am willing to sacrifice myself for the sake of the disinherited poor."

"Then this dreamer has not only blinded you to the fate of Christ Church, but has led you to the brink of self-immolation?"

"He is not a dreamer, Philip. He has not blinded me, nor has he sought to blind me. He has not led me, nor has he sought to lead me. I have offered myself voluntarily for service in his cause. I believe in him, and in his ideals, and in his method of applying Christianity to the conditions that surround us. I have enlisted for the war under his command, and I have told him so."

Looking on her as she stood there, erect, clear-eyed and self-confident, Westgate could have no doubt of her entire belief in the rector, and of her complete absorption in his cause. His heart was stirred with keen regret and sharp foreboding, for he could see only sorrow and bitter disappointment for her, long before the

end of this chimerical crusade could be reached. And yet he was powerless to hold her back. He knew that in her present condition of mind neither argument nor entreaty would be of any avail. She must be permitted to go her way unchecked until the day of final disillusionment. He prayed that that day might speedily come, with only a modicum of disaster.

"We'll not quarrel about it now, dear," he said. "It will be a good many days before I shall see you again, and we must part, to-night, as lovers."

Holding his hands she looked up into his face with moist eyes.

"If I could only have you with me in the fight," she murmured; "you would make such a splendid comrade."

He did not reply at once. The similarity of her expression with that used by the rector earlier in the evening struck in upon him ominously.

"You will have me," he said at last, "to rescue you, and bind up your wounds when the battle goes against you."

"And are you not afraid that you will be giving aid and comfort to the enemy?"

"Oh, no! I will simply be taking the part of the Good Samaritan."

He had drawn her into his arms, and, though clouds and darkness obscured the future, there could be no doubt that, to-night at least, they were still lovers.

CHAPTER IX

THE SPIRIT OF REVENGE

RUTH TRACY was as good as her word. She went to call on Mary Bradley. She found her in the little house on Factory Hill from the porch of which Stephen Lamar had addressed the crowd on the day of Bradley's funeral. It was a bleak November afternoon; a Saturday half-holiday for the more favored class of workers; the busy end of a toilsome week for those whose occupations brought them no week-day respite. The rows of small, brown houses, some of them ill-kept and dilapidated, formed a cheerless foreground to an unattractive landscape. But Ruth Tracy was not unaccustomed to the appearance of an environment such as this, and she was not depressed by the scene. She had done much visiting among the poor. She had left her car at the foot of the hill, and had walked up. She had learned by experience that her work among these people was most effective when there was the least display of luxury.

From a man who overtook her on the street she inquired her way to the Bradley house.

"I am going there myself," he replied, "and I'll show you."

He walked along with her—it was not more than a block or two—and brought her to Mrs. Bradley's door. During this brief walk, however, she learned that her guide was no other than Stephen Lamar, of whom she had often heard, but whom she had not before, to her knowledge, seen. He had taken a personal interest, he told her, in Mrs. Bradley, and had found employment for her during the recent political campaign, at the

headquarters of the Socialist party. She had done her work with such marked efficiency that the committee had kept her on as their secretary and as one of the promoters of their cause. They valued her services highly. The headquarters were closed on Saturday afternoons, and undoubtedly she would be at home. She was at home. When she opened her door in response to Lamar's knock she was somewhat taken aback to see the labor-leader standing on her porch in company with a well-dressed young woman.

"I do not," he said as they entered the house, "know the lady's name nor her errand. I found her on the street, inquiring her way here. I came, myself, to see you about the notices for the Sunday afternoon meeting. There's been a mistake. I'll talk with you about it when your other visitor has gone. In the meantime I'll step into the kitchen and have a little visit with your mother."

"It's not necessary for you to leave the room," interrupted Ruth; "I simply came to make a social call on Mrs. Bradley. I'm Ruth Tracy, and I've heard of Mrs. Bradley through Mr. Farrar, the rector of Christ Church."

The other woman's face flushed at the mention of the rector's name, but she gave no further sign of approval or disapproval of the errand of her guest. She placed a chair for Ruth, and motioned Lamar to a seat across the room. He thanked her, and made no further attempt to withdraw. He was glad to remain. He wanted to know the real purpose of Miss Tracy's visit. He wanted to be able to checkmate any move which might be made toward influencing Mrs. Bradley to identify herself in any way with the Church. He feared that if she should look with favor on organized religion, she would, sooner or later, be lost to the cause of the workingmen, to the cause of socialism, and especially lost to him, Stephen Lamar. So he sat quietly and listened.

With charming tact and simplicity Ruth strove to make herself agreeable to the mistress of the house. Her efforts were received coldly at first, but her evident sincerity and her unaffected interest soon brought a response, and it was not long before the two women were conversing pleasantly and without restraint. There was no offer of help, or of charity of any kind, on the part of the guest, no inquiry into economic conditions, no religious appeal, no intimation of any kind that she was there for any other purpose than that of a friendly visit. Mary Bradley was nonplused. This was something new in her experience. Women of the wealthy class who had called on her heretofore had come with offers of help, or sympathy, or religious consolation; and she had declined their help, had refused their charity, had resented their interference on behalf of the Church. But this was different. Why had this young woman come on what appeared to be simply a friendly visit? What ulterior motive was back of it? How much had the rector of Christ Church to do with it? Except at the moment of introducing herself Ruth had not mentioned his name. It was Mrs. Bradley herself who now brought it to the front.

"I hardly thought," she said, "that Mr. Farrar would have remembered me."

"He forgets no one, and he remembers you very well," was the reply. "He was much concerned over your lawsuit, and over the death of your husband, and he is interested now in your welfare."

"He is very kind. I think he is too good to be a preacher."

"Why do you say that, Mrs. Bradley? Should not a preacher be one of the best of men?"

"Oh, I suppose he should be; but if he is it's in spite of his calling, not because of it."

"I do not understand you."

"I mean this, Miss Tracy; a church such as yours is

in control of the rich people who support it. And the rector can't please those people and be just to the poor at the same time. And the preacher who isn't just to the poor isn't good."

Miss Tracy made no effort to defend the rich people of her church. She simply said:

"I don't think Mr. Farrar is so much concerned about pleasing people as he is about being right. And I think he is very just to the poor."

"So do I. That's the reason I think he is too good for his Church. I've heard about the trouble he is having. I don't know whether you are for him or against him. But I'm sure he'll be beaten in the end."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because the power of money is too great. It controls everything; society, business, law, religion, everything. Sooner or later Mr. Farrar must yield to it or it will destroy him."

"I do not think you know how much will and determination Mr. Farrar has."

"In a way I do. I have heard him preach several times lately. He is very brave. I believe he is as good as he is brave. He has—done me some favors, and I am very grateful to him."

"Then why do you not permit him to call?"

"Did he tell you that I refused him? Well, that was before I knew of what stuff he was made."

"And you wouldn't refuse him now? May I tell him so? He will be so glad."

Lamar, who had been watching, with some uneasiness, the drift of the conversation, could not refrain at this juncture from interrupting it.

"I don't think it does any good, Miss Tracy," he said, "for preachers to visit the working class. It doesn't help us any toward industrial freedom, and that's what we need first, not religion."

"But Mr. Farrar is also an advocate of industrial freedom."

"I know; but his advocacy counts for nothing so long as he preaches from a capitalistic pulpit. If he wants to be of real service to us let him cut loose from the Church and come with us."

"He is trying to make his church a church of the people, where every one, rich and poor, will stand on an equal footing."

"He can't do it. No one can do it. The whole ecclesiastical system would have to be changed to accomplish it. His spectacular crusade will amount to nothing. He's only stirring up trouble for the laboring people. He's making the rich angry, and they'll take it out on the poor. He's making the capitalists afraid, and they'll turn the screws tighter on the men that work for them. I hope Mrs. Bradley will not see this man. It can do her no possible good, and may injure the cause."

Mary Bradley, who had been quiet since Lamar entered into the conversation, turning her eloquent eyes from one to the other of the speakers, now spoke up on her own account. She had on her face something of the look that was there that day in the courtroom when she denounced the injustice of the law. She was not accustomed to being told whom she should or should not receive at her house. Her voice, quiet and well modulated, had in it nevertheless a ring of determination as she turned to Ruth and said:

"You may tell Mr. Farrar that I shall be glad to see him whenever he chooses to come."

In the excitement attendant upon this incident, none of the three had noticed the hum of an automobile in the street outside, nor that the car had stopped in front of Mrs. Bradley's house. There came a knock at her street door, and she went and opened it. Barry and Miss Chichester stood on her porch. She recovered at once from her astonishment and invited them to come in.

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Miss Chichester,

when she came in sight of Ruth. "What in the world brought you here?"

"I came to call on Mrs. Bradley," Ruth answered, quietly.

"Quite a coincidence," remarked Barry. "The last time I came here I found Farrar here. And this time I find his right hand helper here. There must be a conspiracy to get Mrs. Bradley into the Church."

"We're always conspiring to get people into the Church," said Ruth. "Mr. Lamar, let me introduce you to Miss Chichester, and Mr. Malleson."

"Malleson of the Malleson Manufacturing Company," explained Barry. "Vice-president, you know."

Lamar smiled grimly. "I am glad," he said, "to meet so distinguished a gentleman."

"Won't somebody please introduce me to Mrs. Bradley?" asked Miss Chichester plaintively.

"Pardon me!" replied Ruth. "I thought you knew each other. Mrs. Bradley, this is Mr. Malleson's friend, Miss Chichester."

Barry looked doubtful, but Miss Chichester did not demur to the form of the introduction. She bowed slightly and smiled.

"I'm glad to know you," she said. "Barry, that is Mr. Malleson, has told me about you. I believe you have had some very hard times, Mrs. Bradley." She took in the widow's very plain costume, and cast her eyes about the cheaply furnished room.

"Hard times come sooner or later, in one form or another, to every one," replied Mrs. Bradley. "I've simply been having mine now."

"But," continued Miss Chichester, "it must be so distressing to be so poor."

The widow's eyes flashed, but no resentment was discernible in the tone of her voice.

"I have plenty of company. Every one is poor on Factory Hill. Besides, so many people have been kind to me in my misfortune. Mr. Lamar has found con-

genial employment for me. Mr. Farrar has called once to see me. Miss Tracy has to-day made me a most agreeable visit. Miss Chichester has done me the honor to call. Mr. Malleson has been here once before to offer me help, and has done it so courteously and sincerely that I am sure I may look upon him as my friend."

The eyes that she turned on Barry were soft and appealing. He had never seen another woman with such eyes as Mary Bradley's; what wonder that they entranced him? Unaccustomed to any of the social graces, she had bidden her guests to be seated, and sat among them with a modesty and self-confidence that would have done credit to a dweller on the borders of Fountain Park.

"Barry is so tender-hearted," said Miss Chichester, "and so easily touched by the sight of distress. He's really foolish about it."

"Indeed!" said Mary Bradley. "I didn't know."

"Why," stammered Barry, "it's only what we do for all our widows; I mean for all widows who became widows because their husbands were in our employ."

"Exactly," said Mrs. Bradley.

"And that reminds me," continued Barry, "that I've brought the check and voucher with me again, and if you'll sign the check and take the voucher I'll be glad to leave them."

"Barry means," broke in Miss Chichester again, "that you should sign the voucher and take the check, don't you, Barry?"

Without waiting for a reply she hurried on: "I hope you'll do it, Mrs. Bradley. Barry is very anxious to get it settled and off his mind. Aren't you, Barry?"

"I realize that I should have some consideration for Mr. Malleson's mind," replied Mrs. Bradley, "but really, I don't see how I can take this money with a good conscience. I understand," turning her eyes again on Barry and dissipating what little self-assur-

ance he had left, "that you offer me this as a gift, pure and simple?"

"Pure and simple," was his reply; but when he saw her shake her head slightly he added: "Or as a loan, Mrs. Bradley, or as—as a trust. Anything you like so long as you take it."

She laughed a little at that, showing rows of perfect white teeth. Then she turned to Ruth.

"Mr. Malleson's company," she explained, "after my husband's death, in view of my straitened circumstances, offered me a sum of money. I couldn't see my way clear to accept it at the time, and I can't now. I'm working; I'm supporting myself; my debts are paid. I don't see why I should accept this gift, much as I appreciate the generosity of Mr. Malleson and his company. What would you do, Miss Tracy, if you were in my place?"

"I wouldn't take it," replied Ruth, "if I felt that it would in the least humiliate me, or have a tendency to undermine my independence or self-respect."

"There, Mr. Malleson," said Mrs. Bradley, "you hear what Miss Tracy says."

"I do," protested Barry, "but Ruth was never a—a childless widow, with a family to support, and she doesn't know how it feels."

Ruth colored and laughed, but, without waiting for her to respond, the "childless widow" turned to Barry's companion.

"And what would you do, Miss Chichester?" she asked.

"I would take it, without hesitation," Miss Chichester replied. "Miss Tracy is a very dear friend of mine, but I disagree with her entirely in this matter. Besides, the company is rich and can well afford to pay you. And then again, if you shouldn't take it I know Barry would be grieved. Wouldn't you, Barry?"

But the young man was so deeply engaged in study-

ing the lights and shadows on Mrs. Bradley's face that, if he heard the question at all, he paid no heed to it.

The widow now appealed to Lamar.

"Mr. Lamar," she said, "you are a friend of mine, and your judgment is very good. What would you do if you were in my place?"

"I should turn the offer down," replied Lamar, promptly. "It would be a great blunder for you to take this corporation's money. It would injure you and our cause in more ways than one."

The widow smiled again. Her face was fascinating when she smiled. There were two men in the room who would have vouched for that.

"There you are!" she exclaimed. "See what an embarrassing position you place me in. Mr. Malleson and Miss Chichester are positive that I should take the money, and Miss Tracy and Mr. Lamar are equally positive that I shouldn't. Two and two. And you are all my friends. What am I to do?"

Up through Barry's consciousness there struggled a gleam of light.

"I'll tell you what to do, Mrs. Bradley," he said, speaking with unusual rapidity; "hold the matter under advisement, a—hold the matter under advisement. For a fortnight say. Think it over carefully, and—as my friend Farrar would say—prayerfully, and I'll see you about it later."

Then Miss Chichester again had her innings.

"Barry!" she exclaimed, "you'll do nothing of the kind! If you don't close it up to-day you must drop it entirely, because I shall not come with you again to help you put it through."

Barry pondered for a moment over this ultimatum, but he did not appear to be at all displeased.

"I'll not insist," he said, "on your coming again. In fact I think possibly I could get along with Mrs. Bradley better, don't you know, if there wasn't any one present to interfere."

And then the widow closed the discussion. "I have decided," she said, "to adopt Mr. Malleson's suggestion, and hold the matter under advisement." She turned to Barry. "I shall be glad to see you at any time, here or at my office in the Potter Building."

Again those wonderful eyes, looking him through and through, not boldly or coquettishly, or in any unseemly way, but with a magnetic power that a far stronger will than his would have been unable to resist. Ruth rose and took Mrs. Bradley's hand.

"I want you to come and see me," she said. "We shall find so many things to talk about. You will come soon, won't you?" She turned to Lamar and bowed smilingly. "You see, Mr. Lamar," she said, "we women will have our own way, and Mrs. Bradley is just like the rest of us. Barry, if you and Jane are going now, I'll ride down the hill with you."

"We're going now," replied Miss Chichester, firmly. "Come, Barry!"

But Barry, who had risen, stood as if in a dream.

"Come, Barry!" repeated Miss Chichester. "Ruth is already in the street."

It was not until she laid her hand on his sleeve that he really awoke and was able, in some fashion, to make his adieux. He remembered, afterward, much to his dismay, that he had shaken hands cordially with Lamar, and had invited him to call some day at the office and go over to the City Club with him for luncheon.

When they were gone, the door from the kitchen was opened, and the little, gray-haired, wrinkled-faced old woman who had been there on the day of Barry's first call looked in.

"Have they all gone?" she inquired.

"All but Steve, mother," her daughter replied.

"He don't count," she said. "Who was the young lady that came first?"

"That was Miss Ruth Tracy."

"What did she want?"

"She wanted," replied Lamar, "to capture Mary."

"What for?"

"To get her into the Church; to make a hypocrite of her."

"The Church ain't such a bad thing, accordin' to my way o' thinkin'," said the old woman. "Both o' ye'd be better off if ye seen more of it. Who was the other young lady?"

"That was Miss Chichester, mother."

"What did she want?"

"She wanted," replied Lamar, "to protect young Malleson."

"Can't the man take care of himself?"

"Not when Mary's around, he can't."

"Why not?"

"Ask Mary."

But the old woman didn't ask Mary; she gave a little, cackling laugh, and retreated to the kitchen, closing the door behind her.

"I suppose you know the purpose of Miss Tracy's visit," said Lamar when he was again alone with the widow.

"I can imagine what it is," was the reply.

"If she can get you interested in the preacher," he continued, "and the preacher can get you interested in the Church, you're as good as lost."

"I might be as good as saved," she replied.

"That's religious cant. You know what I mean. The moment you get into the Church capital will have its clutches on you. You'll be lost to socialism, lost to labor, lost to me. None of us can afford it."

"You seem to value my services," she said.

"I do. Socialism does. You've brought us more genuine recruits in the short time you've been with us than all those high-toned, college-bred fellows that train with us could get for us in years."

"You are extravagant."

"I have a right to be. I know what I'm talking about."

"Then suppose I should use the power you credit me with in winning over Mr. Farrar and Miss Tracy to the cause. I think they're more than half converted now."

"We don't want them. They're too closely allied to the capitalistic class. We can't afford to have that kind of people with us. The workingmen look on them with suspicion; they have no confidence in them. As for the preacher, he's putting out a big bluff, but he doesn't mean it, and he couldn't accomplish anything if he did. He's wincing now under the screws they're putting on him."

"You have a grievance against the preacher. You haven't got over the drubbing he gave you at Carpenter's Hall. It hurts a little yet, doesn't it, Steve?" She looked at him with mischievous eyes, and a smile shadowing her perfect lips.

"Nonsense, Mary! He didn't get the best of me. Haven't I told you?"

"The crowd seemed to think he did."

"Oh, the crowd! They'll shout for anybody who can tickle their ears with fine phrases. It's the easiest thing in the world to carry a mob of these ignorant, flat-headed day-laborers off their feet."

"How about the 'wisdom of the proletariat'?"

"The 'wisdom of the proletariat' be damned!"

He reddened and laughed a little as he thus passed condemnation on one of his own favorite phrases.

"Well," she said, the smile still playing about her mouth, "what would you say to my converting Barry Malleson?"

"Oh, he's anybody's fool. Do what you like with him. You've got him pulverized already. I'd crack his skull now, out of pure jealousy, if he had brains enough in it to rattle."

"Don't you think he'd make a good socialist?"

"That depends on how far you could bleed him for funds."

"Steve, you're as cold-blooded as a shark."

"I admit it; in everything but my admiration for you. But I don't care to have you setting up friendly relations with such people as this preacher and the crowd that was here to see you to-day. It won't do any good, and may do a good deal of harm."

"Do you propose to control my social conduct?"

"I've been your friend, haven't I?"

"That's very true."

"And I've landed a good job for you?"

"That's true also."

"Then be reasonable; and understand what I have in store for you."

"What have you in store for me?"

"This. Listen! In the new social régime women will be on a par with men. That's a part of the socialist creed. It's going to be a question of brains, not sex. You can be as much of a leader as I can. Working together we can control a following that will give us almost unlimited power, almost unlimited opportunity. There's going to be a rich harvest for some one. It may as well be ours as any one's. Do you understand?"

"I think I do. But that lies pretty well in the future, doesn't it?"

"One can't tell just how near or how far away it may be."

"Well, there's something I want here and now that will give me more pleasure and satisfaction than all the future glory you can predict for me."

"What is it?"

"Revenge."

"What do you mean?"

"I'll explain." She sat with her elbows resting on the table, her hands covering her ears, her eyes dominating him as he sat across from her, taking in her words.

"You know what they did to John Bradley?"

"Yes; they killed him."

"And you know what they did to me?"

"I know; they threw you out of court; treated you like a dog."

"Worse than a dog. I said that day when they got their verdict that I'd make them sorry for it. I propose to do it, and I want you to help me."

"How?"

"I want Richard Malleson smashed. I want his company wrecked. I'll be satisfied with nothing less."

"You've laid out a big job."

"Do you flinch at it?"

"No; but it's no boys' play to do it."

"You know how?"

"There's only one way; put organized labor on his neck."

"Exactly! That's what I want done."

He looked at her for a moment without replying. She sat there resolute, splendid, perfect, the most desirable thing in the world in the eyes and thought of Stephen Lamar. But she had held him at arm's length. She had drawn a rigid line beyond which he had not dared to trespass. Her coolness had only inflamed his ardor. She had given him, now, something to do which would be not only a test of his ability, but a test also of his declared devotion to her. If he should accomplish the task she was setting for him, surely he would be entitled to a rich compensation. Still looking into her eyes he said:

"And if I succeed in doing what you ask, I shall want my pay for it."

"You shall have it," she replied. "What's your price?"

"You."

She laughed a little. "You shall have," she said, "a man's reward for work well done."

And with that promise he had to be content.

Ten minutes later the old woman came back from the kitchen into the living-room, and found her daughter there alone.

"Is Steve gone?" she asked.

"He's gone, mother."

"I don't care much for Steve."

"Why not?"

"I don't like the look in his eye."

"That's no reason."

"He don't believe in God."

"Lots of people don't."

"Nor religion."

"I don't care much for religion myself."

"The more shame to ye. They say Steve's got a wife up in Boston. Has he?"

"I've never asked him. He's never told me."

"But if he has why don't he live with her?"

"That's his own business."

"It's bad business. There's somethin' wrong about him. I say let Steve Lamar alone. He'll do ye harm."

"Mother, I don't care who he is, or what he is, or what he does, so long as he does what I've asked him to do."

"What've ye asked him to do?"

"That's my secret."

"It's a fool's secret. Some day he'll kill ye."

The angry old woman shuffled back into the kitchen and slammed the door behind her.

At eight o'clock that evening Stephen Lamar entered a saloon on lower Main Street, known as "The Silver Star." It was a favorite gathering place for the mill-workers. It was a place where there was undoubted social equality. And in that respect, as Lamar once said to a crowd there, it overtopped any church in the city.

He was greeted noisily as he went in. Some one, standing at the bar, called out to him to come up and have something.

"No," he replied, "I'm not drinking to-night. I'm looking for Bricky."

"Bricky ain't been in yet," said the bartender.

"Maybe he won't come no more," added the man at the bar. "I'm told he's been goin' to hear that feller preach. The feller't wears the nightgown an' flummadiddles an' lets on he's for the laborin' man. Maybe he's got Bricky to cut out the booze."

A man seated alone at a table in the corner of the room spoke up.

"You've got no call to speak disrespectful of Mr. Farrar, Joe. I've been goin' to hear him myself. Take it from me, he's the straight goods."

"Right you are, Bill!" exclaimed another one of the company, and a half dozen voices echoed approval. Then a man, seated with a group at a table, rose unsteadily to his feet and lifted a half-drained glass in the air.

"I drink," he shouted, "to health of rev'ren' 'piscopal preasher. Frien' o' labor. Who joins me?"

Every glass was raised, and all of the men seated rose to take part in the tribute.

"Come, Steve!" shouted one; "take a nip to the preacher."

But Lamar shook his head defiantly.

"Not I," he said. "You fellows can drink your empty heads off to him if you want to. But I say that any one who pretends to be a friend to the laboring man just to get a chance to steer him into a capitalistic church is a damned hypocrite!"

The lone man in the corner brought his glass down on the table with a crash.

"Take that back, Steve!" he shouted. "You've got no right to say that, an' it's a lie. He's no hypocrite. I know. Why, boys, what you think that preacher done when my Tommy was sick an' died with the black fever last spring, an' you, Steve Lamar, and every mother's son of you here, was too damn scared o' your

lives to come within a mile o' the house. He held my boy's hand whilst he was a-dyin'; that's what he done, an' he come there an' read the funeral business when my own brother was afraid to come into the yard; an' the missus would crawl a hundred miles on her hands and knees to-night to do the least kindness to the preacher with a heart in him. Oh, to hell with your knockin'!"

For a moment following this impassioned speech there was utter silence in the room; then came a roar of applause, and in the midst of it some one shouted: "Drink! To the preacher with a heart in 'im! Drink!"

Every man in the room was on his feet and drinking, save Lamar; and every man drank his cup to the bottom in honor of the clergyman who was not afraid.

It was a strange tribute; equivocal, incongruous, unseemly no doubt, but genuine indeed. Lamar stood, for a moment, sullen and defiant; but before the glasses were lowered he turned to the bartender and said:

"When Bricky comes in tell him I want to see him."

Then he strode on into an adjoining private room, and closed the door behind him. But he took back nothing that he had said.

Ten minutes later Bricky came and joined Lamar in the private room. He was a tall, angular fellow, with a shock of dull red hair, and a pair of gray eyes that looked out shrewdly from under overhanging brows. He was a skilled laborer in the plant of the Malleson Manufacturing Company, and a leader of the workingmen employed there.

"You'll have a beer, won't you?" he asked, touching a button in the wall behind him.

"I wasn't drinking," replied Lamar, "but I will have a whiskey, and I'll have it straight. Beer won't touch

the spot to-night. I've got an attack of nerves. The treat's mine."

"Thanks! I heard the boys outside rubbed it into you a little."

"Rubbed nothing in. They can't faze me by shouting for the preacher. And as for Joe Poulsky, damn him! I'll get him yet."

When the whiskey came he drank it at a gulp. Then he asked how the men were getting on at the Malleson plant. Bricky (his name was Thomas Hoover, but few knew him otherwise than as Bricky) replied that things were going on as usual. The wage scale was satisfactory; sanitary conditions good, hours of labor agreeable, bosses human; probably the best plant in the city in which to work.

"When does the agreement expire?"

"First o' January," was the reply.

"Going to renew it?"

"So far's I know. Why?"

Lamar did not answer the question, but he asked another one.

"Do you know how much the company's going to clean up in net profits this year?"

"No; I ain't heard."

"Well, I have. It'll run close to two hundred thousand. Malleson and his family get the lion's share of it."

"I s'pose so. They're the biggest stockholders."

"Do you think you fellows that work there are getting what you're entitled to out of the earnings of that concern?"

"We're gittin' what the scale calls for."

"Never mind the scale. Do you think you're getting a fair share of the money your work brings in?"

"I don't know. I ain't figured it out."

"Well, I have. I know you're entitled to about fifty per cent. more than you're getting."

"That's some of your socialist arithmetic, Steve."

"No. Socialist or no socialist; they could pay you fifty per cent. more and make a handsome profit beside."

"Maybe. I don't know. Maybe we're entitled to it. It's another thing to git it."

"You won't get it unless you ask for it. Why don't you demand an increase under a new scale?"

"The old man wouldn't stand for it."

"He'd have to. He couldn't afford to shut down. He's making too much money. Besides, there are seven non-union men working in the plant. I've had them checked up."

"Well, of course they've got to join or quit."

"Sure! And you're only getting time and a half for overtime. You're entitled to time and three-quarters."

"I guess that's right, too."

"Of course it's right. Why, there are a dozen things that ought to be fixed up before you fellows sign a new scale. That concern's pulling the wool over your eyes every day. Wake up! and get what belongs to you."

"That's easier said than done, Steve."

"Not a bit. All you've got to do is to work the thing up. Get after the men. Convince them. Do it yourself. Don't bring in outsiders. Show them where they're getting trimmed every day they work. Put them up to demand a new scale with an increase that's worth while, and better all-'round conditions."

"Suppose we do that and the old man sticks out?"

"Then strike."

"How long would a strike last without Union backin'?"

"You'd have Union backing. I'll see that the Union endorses you. I can do it. You know that. I'll stop every wheel in every mill in this city till you fellows get what you demand."

"You know what you're talkin' about, Steve? You know what a hell of a lot o' red tape they is about

a strike these labor union days? Meetin's an' votes, an' grievance committees, an' strike committees, an' all the head buckies in the unions buttin' in? How do you know the Central would stand by us?"

"I tell you everything in labor in this district will stand by you. I know what I'm saying. What the devil makes you so chicken-hearted and suspicious?"

The man with the shock of red hair laid his arms on the table and leaned across toward Lamar.

"Look here, Steve," he said, "let's be plain about this thing. No beatin' around the bush. Do you want a strike at the Malleson?"

"I want a strike at the Malleson."

"What for?"

"I'll tell you later. I've got a damned good reason."

The man with the red hair leaned still farther across the table, and spoke in a whisper.

"What is there in it," he asked, "for me?"

Lamar rose, went to the door that led into the room and locked it, dropped the ventilating sash above it, pulled down the shade at the window, and resumed his seat at the table. After that the conversation between the two men was carried on in subdued tones.

Twenty minutes later they came out into the barroom. The man who had given the lie to Lamar was gone. So were most of those who had heard him. But their places were more than filled by others who had come in.

Lamar called all hands to the bar. The drinks, he said, were on him.

"That's right!" affirmed Bricky, nodding to every one. "It's Steve's treat. Say what you'll have."

When the glasses were all filled Lamar raised his and said:

"Here's to better times and better wages!"

"And to the man that brings 'em!" added Bricky.

So they all drank.

CHAPTER X

A MINISTERIAL CRISIS

If any parishioner of Christ Church comforted himself with the thought that the Reverend Robert Farrar had wisely decided to forego his animadversions on the self-constituted privileges of wealth in the Church, or his appeals for social equality in the House of God, he was destined to experience a rude awakening. For, not only did the rector resume his protests and appeals from the pulpit, but he inaugurated and carried on a personal campaign among his people for the adoption of his revolutionary ideas. They were revolutionary indeed. He preached social justice, and Christian socialism. And while a critical analysis of his sermons would doubtless have failed to unearth a single unorthodox phrase, nevertheless he advocated a doctrine which learned commentators had hitherto failed to discover in the written Word of God, and which the pious and profound compilers of the Book of Common Prayer had certainly never contemplated. He dwelt much, as had been his custom, on the lowly origin and humble environment of the Saviour of mankind. He did not minimize the spiritual significance of His mission, as have some professed followers of the Nazarene in order that they might magnify Him as a social prophet. Nor had he great sympathy with those materialistic adherents of the Master who hold that the purpose of His teaching was not so much to point the way to spiritual regeneration as to arouse the Galilean peasants, by parable and precept, to a sense of their economic wrongs, and to instill into their minds a hearty desire

to free themselves from the yoke of the Roman oppressor and the hard ecclesiasticism of the Jewish priesthood. He never sought to rob the Christ of any of the spiritual adornment or any of the divine attributes with which the Church from time immemorial has clothed Him. But he loved to dwell on His passion for the poor.

The rector's gospel of social equality was rejected and resented, or accepted and cherished, according to the personal view-point of those to whom it was presented. The parish was sharply divided. There were few lukewarm adherents to either side in the controversy. Those who were not with him were against him, and against him unequivocally. Some of them went so far as to request that their names be stricken from the parish roll. Others, less impulsive and more worldly-wise, contented themselves with voluntary absence from the services of the church. Still others, and these constituted the greater part of those opposed to the new régime, unwilling to forego the privileges and customs of many years, went, with apprehensive minds, to listen to unwelcome sermons, and came away troubled and depressed.

But the congregations grew in size. Pews given up by former parishioners did not remain vacant for want of occupants. Pewholders in sympathy with the rector's views doubled up with each other or threw their sittings open freely to the public. In one way and another room was found for all the common people who came and who heard gladly the new gospel that was being preached to them.

It is true that the roll of regular supporting parishioners was not greatly lengthened; but the prospects were bright for many additions, and there was abundance of hope for large results in the future.

It is true also that while the cost of caring for the newcomers in all the activities of church life materially increased the amount of necessary expenditure, the

church revenues began, at the same time, to show a marked falling off.

But these things did not greatly disturb the rector. He knew that his first duty was to obey the mandates of the religion in which he believed, and to continue his efforts to reclaim and regenerate the hundreds of hitherto churchless and unwelcome poor who were now turning tired feet toward the portals of Christ Church. Matters of finance must and would adjust themselves to any situation which might result from his efforts in this behalf.

And he had defenders, plenty of them. He had helpers by the score, and companions by the hundred. At least two members of his vestry, Emberly and Hazzard, were outspoken and enthusiastic adherents to his cause. All of his humbler parishioners, new and old, save those few who chanced to be under the domination of men and families of wealth, were with him heartily in his crusade. Class was arrayed against class. To the observant and disinterested onlooker the struggle formed a most illuminating chapter in the record of modern sociological activity.

Among his few supporters in what was considered to be the exclusive social set, Ruth Tracy was by far the most ardent and uncompromising. Here, there, everywhere, she proclaimed the righteousness and justice of the rector's cause. Her faith in him was unbounded, and her faith was fully evidenced by her works. Her mother was scandalized, her father was indifferent, her lover was in despair. To seek to restrain from unwise and unseemly activity a woman who is actuated by religious motives is a delicate and dangerous task, and Westgate was not equal to it. He was ready to cross swords with any legal opponent, to face any legal proposition that might come to his office, to persuade or oppose, to construct or crush, as occasion might demand, but he had no skill or persuasion or power to turn this girl whom he loved aside from the hard path she had

deliberately chosen. He had exhausted logic and entreaty, without avail. There was left to him but one recourse, and that he was not yet ready to adopt.

One afternoon, in the heart of the city, a half dozen of the vestrymen of Christ Church met, informally, to discuss the situation which, in their judgment, had become acute. All but one of them were in favor of drastic action, let the action take what form it would. That one was Westgate. Again he appeared as a conservative. The others demanded that immediate steps be taken to oust the offending clergyman from his pulpit. Westgate pleaded for delay. He asked for a length of time within which he might, as a friend, approach the rector and urge upon him the advisability, if not the necessity, of a quiet, dignified, unsensational resignation, and relinquishment of his office. Since the night of the Tracy dinner he had abandoned any idea that he might have had that the clergyman would listen to reason or to good advice. His only hope now was that a vacancy in the pulpit might be brought about without a bitter and unseemly conflict. His fellow-vestrymen did not agree with him in his view of the case. They maintained that the Reverend Mr. Farrar was not entitled to so much consideration as Westgate proposed to show him. But they finally yielded, with the explicit understanding that this was to be the last proposal for peace. If it should not be accepted they would at once resort to hostile measures.

Westgate was to see Mr. Farrar at the earliest opportunity, and report the result of his visit. But it was not until two days later that he was able to go forth on his unhappy mission. He found the minister at home. On his face, as he welcomed his visitor, there was no look of apprehension or surprise. He was calm, self-assured, quietly expectant. He appeared to know, by intuition, the purport of the call. Westgate indulged in no prologue, nor did he make any excuses or apologies. In courteous phrases, with

the deep concern of a friend, he went at once to the heart of his errand.

The rector heard him through without interruption, apparently unperturbed.

"I cannot resign," was his answer.

"Why not?" asked Westgate.

"I will tell you. In the first place it would be a tacit admission that I am in the wrong. I cannot admit that, for I believe that I am indubitably right. In the next place, to resign would be breaking faith with the hundreds of humble folk to whom I have promised the privileges of Christ Church, and who are even now, in a sense, receiving them. Were I to leave your pulpit they would be as sheep without a shepherd. I do not speak in self-aggrandizement. I simply know that no one whom your vestry would be likely to call to succeed me could fill, or would try to fill, the place which I now hold in their hearts and confidence. Were I to go the respect that these people now have for the Church would disappear, the religious sensibility that has been awakened in them would be destroyed, they would go back to their old, churchless, hopeless, irreligious life, unreconciled either to God or man. I tell you, Westgate, I cannot resign."

"Do you think that an interest, or even a religion based on a mere personal relation to a pastor, is likely to become an enduring or a fundamental thing in any man's life?"

"Yes; if it is accompanied and followed by conditions which make the gospel that is being preached to him real and satisfying."

"But you should know that the people who are flocking to Christ Church now are merely seeking new sensations. They are improving an opportunity to gratify class resentment against the rich and the well-to-do. They have no thought of attaching themselves permanently to the Church. When the novelty of the thing has worn off they are certain to drift away."

"You say that because you do not know them and do not believe in them. Give me one year to make Christ Church what I would have it to be, and I will show you such a permanent turning to righteousness in this city on the part of those who hitherto have had no use for religion, as will astound the unbelievers in my methods."

His face glowed and his eyes shone with enthusiasm. No one, looking on him in that moment, could have doubted his intense earnestness. But to Westgate's practical and logical mind the rector's words carried no conviction. He was still calm and deliberate as he replied:

"Mr. Farrar, I did not come to argue with you concerning your theories or your conduct. The time for argument has passed, because your mind is irretrievably set. I came to make a simple request; that you should resign. I ask it for the good of Christ Church."

"I believe I am acting for the best good of Christ Church in refusing."

"That being your final answer there is no doubt but that the vestry as a body will demand your removal as rector."

The ultimatum had come at last, but it brought no surprise nor dismay. The rector smiled.

"That announcement," he said, "is not unexpected, nor does it disturb me in the least. I know what my rights are under the constitution and canons of the Church, and I shall seek to maintain them. I know also what my obligations are to the people to whom I minister, and to the Church to which I have made my ordination vows. Those obligations will not permit me either to abandon or to let myself be driven from the post to which God in His wisdom has seen fit to assign me."

"Then I am to carry back to the gentlemen who are associated with me your refusal and your defiance?"

"My regret rather, and my determination. I am

sorry. These men have been more than kind to me in the past. But—I cannot change my mind."

"Very well. I said to you once that I should oppose you openly in the course you were pursuing. I have done so, but I have at the same time tried to protect you. That protection is at an end. I say now, frankly, that I shall use my best effort to force you from the pulpit of this church, for I believe you are driving the church straight to disaster."

The rector smiled again, sadly, but his purpose was in no wise shaken.

"You are kind to be so frank with me," he said. "You have always been kind to me, and I have been fond of you. I shall still be fond of you, because I believe you to be honest and sincere, though mistaken. We may be adversaries; we cannot be enemies."

Westgate made no reply. He had reached a point where he could not share the friendly feeling of the rector. He could not be fond of a man who recklessly and obstinately, however conscientiously, refused to forego his determination to make Christ Church the forfeit in his game of Christian socialism. Moreover —

"There is one other thing I want to speak of at this time," said Westgate, "a personal matter."

Both men had risen to their feet and had been moving slowly toward the door of the study. The lawyer stopped and faced the minister. It was evident that the "personal matter" was one which lay near to his heart, for his face had paled and his jaws were set with determination.

"It is this," he said. "Ruth Tracy has become the chief worker for your cause in the parish. I assume that it has been your direct influence that has produced her present abnormal state of mind. She is under the spell of a powerful personality. She is my fiancée. I have a right to protect her, and to conserve my own happiness. What you have had power to do, you have

power to undo. I ask you now to relinquish your control of her conscience and judgment, and to refuse to carry her farther with you in a course which can only lead her into deep sorrow and great humiliation."

The Reverend Mr. Farrar did not at once reply. A phase of the situation had been presented to him which had not before crossed his mind. He had met, and had solved to his own satisfaction, every problem in the controversy which he could foresee. This one was entirely new. But his clear vision and quick judgment went at once to the heart of it.

"I have used no persuasion on Miss Tracy," he said at last. "Her absorption in this crusade has been entirely due to her own innate sense of righteousness and of social justice. For me to seek now to dissuade her from any continuance in this work would be to shake her faith, and to discredit my own sincerity of purpose. I cannot do what you ask."

Westgate was annoyed. For the first time in all this unhappy controversy he felt that forbearance was no longer a virtue.

"Then you insist," he said, "in making selfish use of her to advance your own peculiar propaganda, regardless of her happiness, or her mother's peace of mind, or of my rights as her affianced lover?"

"I insist on giving her free rein, so far as I am concerned, to work out the impulses of a noble mind and heart. She has high ideals. I shall assist her, so far as I am able, to attain them."

"Even though in doing so you blast her happiness and wreck her life?"

"That is an absurd and irreligious supposition, Westgate. I repeat that I shall make no attempt to dissuade her from carrying out her high purpose, and you, even as her affianced lover, have no right to ask it."

"I do not ask it any longer, I demand it. I demand that you, as an honest man, and as a minister of God, unseal that woman's eyes that she may see."

"As an honest man and a minister of God I shall do all that lies in my power to blind her eyes to any less worthy object than the advancement of Christ's Kingdom on earth."

A point had been reached beyond which words were vain. With men in whom the animal instinct predominates, blows would have been next in order. To these gentlemen it was simply apparent that the interview was at an end.

Westgate opened the study door to pass out into the hall, but, facing him, blocking his way, the rector's wife stood, white-faced and trembling. She had heard the high-pitched voices, the demand and the refusal. Unreasoning fear possessed her. She threw herself into her husband's arms.

"Oh, Robert!" she cried. "What awful thing has happened now?"

He laid his hand on her head soothingly.

"Don't be frightened, dear. It is simply another desertion. Mr. Westgate definitely joins our enemies."

She looked apprehensively at Westgate, and he went up to her and took her hand.

"I am not your enemy, Mrs. Farrar," he said. "I never shall be. Whatever happens you shall have sympathy and friendship, both from my mother and from me, and such help and comfort as we may be permitted to give to you."

"Thank you, Mr. Westgate! You and your mother have always been good to us."

"And we shall continue to be to the best of our ability. Good-bye!"

When Westgate had gone she turned again to her husband and demanded that he tell her what had happened. He did so. He told her plainly of the request for his resignation, and of his refusal to consider it.

"Oh, why didn't you do what they asked of you?" she wailed. "It would have been so much better than keeping up this horrid fight. I am so sick and tired of

it. If we could only get away from this dreadful place!"

"It's a splendid place, Alice. It's the field of Armageddon for us. The Lord's battle is on. Would you have me branded as a deserter?"

"I don't know, Robert. I only know that I'm so miserable. If we could only live somewhere, in any little place, at peace, and let some one else do the fighting. You said, one day, that I shouldn't have married a minister. It hurt me then, but I've thought a good deal about it since,—and now I know it's true. I'm such a hopeless drag on you."

"You're a very great comfort to me, dear."

It was not true, and he knew in his heart that it was not true; but he could say no less and be a Christian gentleman.

"Thank you, Robert! And I've thought a good many times since then that if you only had a wife like Ruth Tracy, what a help and blessing she'd be to you."

This reflection of his own tenuous dream fell upon him so unexpectedly, struck him so gruesomely, that, for the moment, he could make no reply. And before he did find his tongue her thought was diverted into a new channel. She suddenly remembered something that she had heard at the door.

"Oh, Robert, what woman's eyes were they that Mr. Westgate wanted unsealed? Were they mine?"

"No, dear, they were not yours."

"Whose then?"

"Ruth Tracy's."

She backed away a little and looked at him inquiringly.

"Ruth—Tracy's? I don't understand. What did he mean?"

"Why, he appears to think that I have cast some sort of a hypnotic spell over Miss Tracy to induce her to go along with me in my fight."

"That's just what Jane Chichester says that so many

people are saying. She told me so yesterday. They say that Miss Tracy must be hypnotized, the way she's sacrificing herself in your interest."

He became a little impatient at that.

"I wish you wouldn't take so seriously what Miss Chichester says. She's hardly to be depended upon where gossip is concerned."

"But you haven't, have you, Robert? You haven't cast any spell over her?"

She was entirely serious. So serious that he was moved to mirth.

"No," he replied, after a moment. "I do not possess hypnotic powers. Whatever Miss Tracy is doing, she is doing entirely of her own free will."

"She has been a very great help to you, hasn't she?"

"She has been my strongest champion and ablest worker."

"If she could only have been your wife!"

Many times that day and in the days that followed, his wife's wish concerning Ruth Tracy crossed the rector's mind. He did not dwell so much on the spirit of self-abnegation which the wish displayed as he did upon the contemplation of a woman like Ruth Tracy, with her steady helpfulness, her unfailing courage, her splendid optimism, being a part of his daily life. It was a gracious vision, indeed; warp and woof of idealism, with no thread of selfishness running through it, nor of disloyalty to the woman whom he had really married, and with whom he was still genuinely in love.

Westgate went back to the gentlemen of the vestry and reported the result of his errand. They had the pleasure of saying, "I told you so," and set about at once to consider ways and means of ridding the pulpit of Christ Church, in the speediest and most effective manner, of its ungracious and unworthy incumbent.

"I am with you, gentlemen," said Westgate, "in any action you may see fit to take, however drastic.

The time for compromise has gone by. It must be a fight now to the finish."

They applauded him, and announced that they were ready to take the first step, and asked him what it should be. He advised them that the first step was the sending of a letter of information from the vestry to the bishop. This would require the formal action of the vestry as a body, the next regular meeting of which would be held the coming Friday evening. It was decided to bring the matter up at that time. Lest any charge should lie against them of unfairness or lack of good faith, they had a notice sent to each member of the vestry, and to the rector, to the effect that a resolution would be offered at that meeting having for its purpose an application to the ecclesiastical authority of the diocese for the dissolution of the pastoral relation between the incumbent minister and the parish of Christ Church.

At the hour fixed for the meeting every member of the vestry was present. They were there with anxious and apprehensive minds, dreading yet not avoiding the issue which they knew would arise.

The rector was chairman of the meeting as usual. It was his right, under the canons, to act as chairman. But, when the customary business had been disposed of, he called the senior warden, Judge Bosworth, to the chair.

"I do this," he explained, "in order that none of you may be embarrassed in any formal action you may see fit to take concerning me."

When the substitution had been made, Westgate arose and said that he desired to offer a resolution which he had prepared at the request of certain members of the vestry. His resolution, which he then read, was as follows:

> "*Whereas*, by the XXVI article of our established religion it becomes the duty of those having knowledge of the offenses of ministers

of the Church to present that knowledge to those in authority:

"*And Whereas*, the members of this vestry believe that the Reverend Robert Bruce Farrar, minister of Christ Church, has violated certain canons of the Church, and certain rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer, in that he has held and taught publicly, privately and advisedly, doctrines contrary to those held by the Church; and has officiated at the burial of the dead and administered the holy communion in a manner contrary to that ordered by the said rubrics:

"*Therefore, be it Resolved* that we, the vestry of Christ Church, desire a separation and dissolution of the pastoral relation now existing between the said minister and the parish of Christ Church, and that we present a notice in writing to that effect to the Right Reverend, the Bishop of this diocese, and pray his judgment accordingly."

"I move the adoption of the resolution," said Mr. Hughes.

"I second the motion," added Mr. Cochrane.

Emberly was on his feet in an instant; but before he could speak the rector had risen.

"If my friend Mr. Emberly will pardon me," he said, "and permit me to interrupt him, I desire to say that it is my preference that there shall be no controversy over this resolution. I am informed that a majority of the members of the vestry have already pledged themselves to its support. Argument, therefore, which might lead to harsh words and unfriendly thoughts, and would be a mere waste of the time occupied in making it, had better be avoided. However, lest there should be any possible doubt as to my attitude, let me say now that I deny absolutely the charges

made against me in the preamble to this resolution, and that, at the proper time and in the proper place, I will defend myself against them."

Through the tact and good sense of the rector a scene had been avoided. The gentlemen of the vestry, relieved of apprehension, breathed more freely, and Westgate called for the question.

The resolution was adopted without argument. Emberly and Hazzard were the only ones who voted against it, old Mr. Ray, greatly disturbed in mind over the unhappy affair, declining to vote.

Those who had voted "aye" then attached their signatures to the resolution, and the next day it was forwarded to the bishop of the diocese for his godly consideration. When his reply came it was to the effect that inasmuch as he intended to make his annual visitation to the parish early in February, he would postpone a hearing on the charges until that time. What he wrote privately to the rector, if he wrote at all, was never disclosed.

No attempt was made to keep secret the action taken by the vestry at the Friday evening meeting. The whole city knew of it the next morning and was accordingly aroused. The newspapers which, as a matter of journalistic policy, had fought shy of the controversy in its earlier stages, now blazoned forth to the public, under scare head-lines, the news of the climax of the trouble in Christ Church. Whenever two men of the parish met each other on the street, or in any business or social place, the matter was not only mentioned but often freely discussed. Women went far out of their way to gossip about it. Jane Chichester had not found such absorbing occupation, either for her feet or her tongue, in many a day.

Not only the parish, but the whole city was soon divided into two hostile camps. Old friendships were strained, old relations were severed, and many a gap was opened between those who had theretofore walked

side by side. In the barroom of the Silver Star saloon a heated controversy over the matter resulted in a fierce brawl, bruised bodies, battered faces, and a police-court episode the following day.

And Mephistopheles drew his red cloak about him, concealed his cloven hoofs therein, sat down in the shadow of an age-old olive tree, and smiled in sinister content.

CHAPTER XI

A ROMANTIC EPISODE

WHEN the rector of Christ Church learned from Ruth Tracy that the Widow Bradley was willing to see him, he found an early opportunity to call on her. She received him courteously, and listened intently to all that he said, but he found her even more reticent than she had been on the occasion of his first visit. She was, however, interested in his crusade for social justice in the Church and asked him many questions concerning it. At the conclusion of his visit she freely offered to him any assistance which she was capable of giving in the carrying on of his fight. The subject of personal religion was barely touched upon. The rector was too wise to force that matter upon her attention prematurely. But, thereafter, the Reverend Mr. Farrar had no more devoted adherent in the entire city than Mary Bradley, unless indeed it might have been Ruth Tracy herself. When Miss Tracy was informed of the widow's attitude toward the conflict in the parish, she came again to see her and took counsel with her concerning the efforts that might be made among the residents of Factory Hill to awaken and further an interest in Christ Church and in the cause of its rector. Mrs. Bradley again promised her assistance and she gave it. She gave it so freely and so effectively that both Miss Tracy and the rector came soon to look upon her as one of their most valued and faithful advisers and helpers. But members of the socialistic body by which she was employed complained that her office in the Potter Building was becoming a headquarters for religious

propaganda. Stephen Lamar suggested to her one day that she was hired to spread the doctrines of socialism and not to fight the battles of unorthodox clergymen. She laughed at that, and told him that when he came to a right understanding of the principles of his creed he would know that it all worked to the same end, and that to sow dissension in the churches was to advance by that much the social millennium. She added, moreover, that whenever the League considered that her services were not worth her salary, she would gladly relinquish her position. He made no further complaint. He did not again chide her, as he had done on several occasions, for her regular attendance on the services at Christ Church. So long as he discovered no particular awakening of religious sensibility on her part he was content thereafter to let her have her own way. As his desire for her increased and grew more and more imperious, his caution was augmented, lest by his own inadvertence he should thwart the happiness to which he confidently looked forward.

But Mary Bradley's work and influence in behalf of the rector of Christ Church and of his cause were not confined to the proletariat among whom she dwelt. By no means! Her position brought her into contact, not with wealthy people, for these rarely have any leaning toward socialism; but with a number of persons of intellectuality and high standing in the community; and among these she awakened, unobtrusively, subtly perhaps, an interest in if not a sympathy for the fighting rector.

Barry Malleson was one of her converts. He had, all his life, been an attendant at Christ Church, his father was a liberal contributor to all of its financial needs, his mother and sisters, aristocratically pious, were devoted to its interests. But, under the influence and gentle persuasion of Mary Bradley, proletarian, agnostic, revolutionist, Barry Malleson was transformed from an outspoken opponent of the rector's views to a

warm supporter of his cause. Not that all this was accomplished at a single sitting. It required many interviews, interviews which Barry not only freely granted, but, if the truth must be told, interviews which he diligently sought. He was no stranger at socialistic headquarters in the Potter Building. Twice, at least, he had been seen walking on the street with the handsome secretary. He made no concealment of his admiration for her. It was not his nature to conceal anything. But, when his friends rallied him on his apparent conquest, he admitted that as yet the affair was a mere matter of personal friendship, and was largely due to a common interest with Mrs. Bradley in certain social problems. No one attributed to him any improper motive. He had the cleanest of minds. He was the farthest of any man in the city from being a rake. That was why the public regarded the situation so seriously. That was why certain mothers with marriageable daughters, who preferred wealth and social standing to brilliancy of intellect, deprecated, in sorrowful if not severe terms, the young man's apparent infatuation. As for Miss Chichester, she was inconsolable. She had tried suggestion, persuasion, intimidation, in turn; but all in vain. Barry was good-naturedly obstinate. Even in the face of the most dreadful prognostications as to what might happen if he should continue his relations with the widow, he persistently declined to break them off. Yet, in reality, Barry had not begun to reach that stage in his siege of Mrs. Bradley's heart which his friends gave him credit for having reached. He had spoken no word of love to her. He realized that her late consort had departed this life so recently as the last September, and that the first snow of winter had but lately fallen. And Barry was a gentleman. Morever he had not yet been able to overcome a certain diffidence, a slowness of thought, a lack of fluency of speech while in her presence. He felt that this might be a serious drawback when the

time should really come for love-making. For it must be admitted that Barry had taken into contemplation more than once a proposal of marriage to the widow, and the difficulties which might beset it. He could not quite understand his own hesitancy. Heretofore he had shown perfect self-composure in his association with women of all social grades. He had asked Ruth Tracy to marry him with as much self-assurance and ease of manner as he would have exhibited in asking for another cup of coffee at breakfast time. If Jane Chichester had appealed to his romantic fancy in the slightest degree, he could have proposed marriage to her without the quickening of a pulse or the moving of an eyelash. But the very thought of approaching the Widow Bradley on the subject of love and matrimony threw him into a fever and flutter of excitement.

The gradual winning over of Barry to the rector's cause had been attended with some raillery on the part of his friends, and some unhappy comments in his presence on the part of members of his family. But once persuaded he was not easily dissuaded. Not that his adherence to either party in the conflict was a matter of great moment. He was not a vestryman, he was not a communicant, he was without voice, and, broadly speaking, without influence in the counsels of the church, yet his defection was not without its bearing on the case, and he, himself, considered his change of attitude as being most significant and important. The matter of the controversy weighed heavily on his mind. He gave it much time and thought. On more than one occasion he interviewed the rector, the several vestrymen, and some of the leading women of the church, in a fruitless effort to bring about harmony. The questions that had arisen occupied his attention to the exclusion of more important matters. Their consideration seriously interfered with the due performance of the duties that had been assigned to him as vice-president of the Malleson Manufacturing Company, although it must be admitted

that his neglect, if it was such, did not appear to hamper the corporation to any appreciable extent in the carrying on of its business. He knew that the resolution for the rector's dismissal was to come before the vestry for action on that Friday evening. Every one in the city who had any interest at all in the case knew it. But there were few who were as greatly disturbed by the knowledge as was Barry Malleson. He went in the afternoon to see a majority of the vestrymen concerning the matter, but, with the exception of Emberly and Hazzard, they were all either obdurate or reticent. His protests against the proposed action fell generally upon stony ground. The next morning he picked up the morning paper and ran his eyes over the columns until they fell upon the brief but sensational account of the action of the vestry the night before.

"Well," he said, "I see they've done it."

It was at the breakfast table. The members of the family were gathered for the morning meal.

"Who's done what?" asked his sister, Miss Veloura.

"Why," was the reply, "the vestry has resolved to put Farrar out."

"It'll be a good riddance," was the comment of Barry's mother.

"If they could only do the same thing to Ruth Tracy," said the elder sister.

"And the Bradley woman," added Miss Veloura.

Mr. Malleson, the elder, ate his grapefruit and remained discreetly silent.

"Why the Bradley woman?" asked Barry, bridling up.

"Because she's a nuisance and a nobody," was the reply.

And then little Miss Ramona, aged fifteen, who had heard some of the gossip of the town, rebuked her sister in this wise:

"You shouldn't say such things about Mrs. Bradley, Veloura. She may be your sister-in-law yet."

"Horrors!" The ejaculation came from the elder sister.

"Have you made up your mind to marry her, Barry?" persisted Miss Ramona.

And Barry replied doggedly:

"Yes; if she'll have me."

To describe the consternation that reigned at Mr. Malleson's breakfast-table following this answer would be to give a fairly good illustration of the meaning of the word itself. They all knew, of course, that Barry was paying some attention to the widow. Knowledge of that fact could not well escape them. Every rich young man, however, was entitled to indulge in temporary aberrations of fancy, and Barry was indulging in his. But to have him really and seriously contemplate marriage with the woman! Again, "Horrors!" The family gathering broke up in a storm from which tears were not entirely absent, and every one lost his or her temper save only Barry. He never lost his temper. An unkind friend said of him, one day, that he had never had any temper to lose. When he rose from the breakfast-table he did not wait for his car. He put on his hat and overcoat and started down-town on foot. He struck into Main Street at the foot of the hill and followed it almost its entire length. He did not turn off in the direction of the factory, but went straight on until he reached the Potter Building, three blocks farther down. Ignoring the elevator he mounted the staircase to the second floor and entered the room occupied by the Socialist League as a headquarters. Mrs. Bradley was already there and at work. Moreover she was alone. When Barry came in she gave him a welcoming smile and word.

"I'm glad you came," she said. "There are two or three things about which I want to talk with you."

"I suppose Farrar's case is one of them," said Barry. "You know they've started to put him out."

"Yes, I've just been reading about it in the morning papers."

"So have I. That's what I came for: to see what we're going to do about it."

"Do? What can we do? They have him beaten. He may as well admit it—and take his medicine."

"Well, I don't know about that. It struck me we might get up a petition."

"To whom?"

"To the bishop. They say the whole thing is up to the bishop now."

"Who would sign it?"

"Why, I thought you might get all those people on Factory Hill that go there to church, and I could scuttle around among his friends in the city ——"

She interrupted him impatiently.

"That would be worse than useless," she said. "Do you think, for one moment, that your bishop of the Church would listen to the cry of the poor as against the demand of the rich? It's preposterous!"

"Well, I know the bishop. He's a pretty good fellow. I've had him out in my car. I might go to him personally and explain matters."

She smiled at that. But she said nothing in derogation of Barry's influence.

"You are one man against fifty of your own class," she remarked. "You could do nothing. It would be a waste of time and money to visit the bishop."

"But, I say, we mustn't let Farrar get knocked out like that, and not do a thing to help him."

"I don't know. I don't know but it would be a mercy to him to withhold all help and encouragement. The end would come sooner. The struggle would not be so prolonged. The aggregate amount of pain he will suffer will be less."

Barry looked at her with uncomprehending eyes.

"Eh?" he said. "I don't quite get you."

"Why, they're bound to destroy him. They'll do it.

That's a foregone conclusion. It would be vastly better for him to make his peace with them now, to abandon his heresies along with his poor, and save himself from ecclesiastical annihilation. But," and she looked beyond Barry into some sunlit, splendid distance, "if he does hold out, if he does defy them, if he does go down fighting, he'll be a hero, like—like his own Jesus Christ."

The flame was in her cheeks, her eyes were burning, her muscles were tense with the stress of her emotion. Suddenly she changed the subject. She was again calm. Her voice took on its accustomed, musical, well-modulated tones.

"There's another thing," she said, "about which I wanted to speak to you."

Barry started, as if from sleep. Apparently she could cast a spell on him, and waken him from it at her will.

"Eh?" he replied; "how was that?"

"There's another thing," she repeated, "about which I wanted to speak to you."

"What is it?" he asked.

"It's about your men. I hear they are dissatisfied with the present wage scale, and are going to demand concessions when the agreement expires in January."

"Why, I've heard something of the kind. But there's no occasion for it. Really there isn't. The men have a very liberal agreement. I signed it myself as vice-president of the company last January."

"Nevertheless the men are dissatisfied with it. They're going to demand a change. The question is what are your people going to do for them?"

"Why, the matter hasn't come up. We haven't considered it."

"Pardon me, but I think it's time you did. Do not misunderstand me. I'm not a member of the Union, and I don't represent the men in any way. But I'm interested in them. I feel that they're deserving of better wages than they're getting, and better condi-

tions of labor, and that they ought to get those things without having to fight for them."

"But they've already got them, Mrs. Bradley."

"Oh, I know that's the way you look at it, but you don't see it from the men's standpoint at all. I wish you could. I wish I could make you. I sympathize with them so deeply. That's why I'm interceding for them."

"A—it's very kind of you."

"I suppose I ought to go to your father. He's president of the company. But I don't know him. I should be afraid. I hear he's very stern."

"Oh, not so very. That depends on how you happen to strike him."

"I wouldn't take the chance of making a fortunate strike. But it occurred to me that you are vice-president of the company, and that's nearly as important a position, and—and I know you." Her eloquent eyes rested on Barry's for a moment in mute appeal, and then modestly dropped. "You've been my friend," she continued, "and my adviser. And, somehow, I'm not afraid to talk to you."

She looked up at him shyly, bewitchingly. When she looked up at him that way he never failed to lose himself completely.

"Oh, that's all right," he assured her. "You've nothing to fear from me. I—I wouldn't hurt you for the world."

"No," she said, "I know you wouldn't. I've always felt that you were perfectly"—she was going to say harmless; but she didn't; she said—"unselfish. And so I thought you would let me talk to you about the men."

"You can talk to me about anything, Mrs. Bradley—anything."

"Thank you! Now, may I ask you what wages the men are getting?"

"Certainly! All the way from a dollar sixty for the

common laborer up to four dollars a day for the skilled workman."

"Do you call that enough?"

"Why, I hadn't thought about it. But I'm sure no better wages are paid anywhere."

"Perhaps not. But is it enough? Could you, for instance, live on a dollar sixty a day?"

"But I'm not a common laborer."

"Well, then, could you live on four dollars a day, and—support a family?"

The widow's eyes dropped again.

"I'm not a skilled workman, either," protested Barry, waiting for the alluring lids to rise.

"No? What are you?"

"I—I'm vice-president of the company."

"You receive some compensation, I suppose, for performing the onerous duties of the position?"

"Sure! I get four hundred dollars a month."

"Well, for the sake of argument, let us say you earn that amount. And let us say that Bricky Hoover, for instance, earns four dollars a day. Do you work any harder for your money than he works for his?"

"But I work with my brains."

"Your—your what?"

"My brains, Mrs. Bradley."

There was a little smile about the widow's mouth, but Barry was both unsuspecting and helpless.

"Oh, yes," she responded. "Well, he works with his hands plus his brains, and puts in longer hours than you do besides. Why shouldn't he get at least as much for his work as you do for yours?"

"But you don't consider the responsibility, the—the mental burden, the nervous strain, the—the wear and tear."

"Very good! Let us say then that yours is the harder job, that it is four times as hard as his. How would you like to change places with him, and have it easier?"

"Mrs. Bradley! The idea!"

"Well, how would you like, then, to change jobs with him, and each retain his own salary?"

"Me? Work in the mill, like him, for four hundred dollars a month?"

"Yes."

"I couldn't think of it, Mrs. Bradley. Really, I couldn't."

Barry looked down at his smooth, white hands with their well-manicured extremities, at his carefully creased trousers and his highly-polished shoes.

Mrs. Bradley laughed a little, but not tantalizingly nor maliciously.

"Well," she said, "then we'll not compel you to make the change. But, assuming that you work equally hard, can you give me any good reason why you should receive four times as much pay as he does?"

"Why—why, I can't think of any just at this moment. But there is one. I'm sure there is one."

"Then let's figure the thing out a little farther. You are both men with hearts, brains, bodies, ambitions, desires. There is no natural law which gives one preference over the other. An hour of his time is worth as much to him, as a man, as an hour of your time is worth to you. An hour's labor takes as much of his effort, strength, vitality, as an hour's labor takes of yours. Why should he get one hundred dollars a month for what he gives to society, and you get four hundred dollars a month for what you give?"

"Why, I—I never thought of it just that way."

"Think of it that way, Mr. Malleson. Look at it occasionally from the standpoint of the man who works for wages. If he works equally hard with you to produce the profits that your company earns, why shouldn't he share equally with you in the matter of compensation for his work?"

"Honestly, Mrs. Bradley, I don't know."

"I thought you didn't. I thought you hadn't con-

sidered it. I wish you would consider it, Mr. Malleson. And when the men come to you with their plea or demand for better wages or conditions, especially the dollar sixty men, look at the matter from their standpoint, for once, and be fair with them."

Having concluded her appeal, she rested her elbows on the table, put her hands against her cheeks, and looked him through with her splendid eyes.

Poor Barry! He had neither will nor wit nor logic to refute her argument or pierce the fallacy with which it was enmeshed. Indeed, under the spell of her eyes and voice, he felt himself drifting helplessly toward the shoals of that socialism which he never understood but always abhorred.

"Mrs. Bradley," he replied, finally, "I—I shall do my duty."

"I knew you would," she said. "I knew you would be just and generous, because"—her eyes went down again—"because you have been both just and generous to me."

Her voice came like soft music to Barry's ears, attuned to receive it. Before his eyes floated a roseate haze. And up, out of the haze, looming uncertainly but with great promise, he saw the shadowy outline of an opportunity. It came upon him so suddenly that it almost took away his breath. It must have been instinct or intuition; it certainly was not quickness of thought which led him to grasp it.

"No one," he heard himself say, "could help being just and generous to you."

"Why do you say that, Mr. Malleson?"

"I—I don't know." He was beginning to flounder again. "Yes, I do." There was a sudden accession of courage. "It's because it's true. It's because you deserve it. It's—it's because everybody likes you."

"You are trying to flatter me, Mr. Malleson."

"No, honestly, I'm not. I mean it. I mean that you—I might say—without qualification ——"

He was hopelessly entangled and had to stop. She came unobtrusively to his aid.

"I think I understand you," she said. "It's delightful to be appreciated by—those whom you appreciate."

For the fourth time in ten minutes her eyes were veiled by her lashes. It's a fascinating trick when the rest of the countenance is in complete harmony with it.

The opportunity already partially grasped was taking on substance and a definite outline. Something whispered to Barry that he should take a firmer hold. He leaned across the table toward the charming secretary, and started in again.

"A—speaking for myself," he said, "I may say I've admired a good many women, but I've never admired anybody quite so much as I do you."

Well spoken, Barry! She couldn't fail to understand that. That she did understand it was evidenced by the deepening flush in her cheeks, by the nervous tapping of her finger-tips on the surface of the table, by the slight tremulousness in her voice as she asked:

"What is there to admire about me, Mr. Malleson?"

"Your beauty, for one thing," answered Barry promptly.

"I thought I was very plain."

It is remarkable with what a clear conscience a woman can lie when she is deprecating what she knows to be her own charms.

"But you're not," protested Barry. "There isn't a woman in my set, in fact there isn't a woman in the upper grade of society in this city, one half so handsome as you are."

Barry's tongue was becoming loosened by his earnestness. The widow's eyes narrowed a trifle, but if there was any danger behind them they did not reveal it.

"And if that were true what advantage would it be to me," she asked, "belonging as I do to the lower classes?"

Barry's answer came promptly and decisively.

"It has been of advantage to you, Mrs. Bradley. It has attracted me to you."

She looked at him curiously.

"It is not always wise or prudent," she said, "for women belonging to the lower classes to attract rich and aristocratic young gentlemen to them."

"But I'm in earnest, Mrs. Bradley. I'm awfully in earnest. I—I must have you."

"Mr. Malleson!"

"Pardon me! I didn't mean it."

"Mr. Malleson!"

"I mean I did mean it, but I didn't mean it offensively."

"Oh, I'm so relieved. A woman in my station in life has to be so exceedingly careful of her reputation."

"That's all right, Mrs. Bradley. I wouldn't do a thing, or say a thing to in any way—to ——"

"Thank you!"

"And, besides, I'm honest in all this—dead honest. I mean it; really, I do."

There was no doubt about his earnestness. His face glowed with it. His hands twitched with it. Every line of the body that he bent toward her was eloquent with it.

"Just what do you mean, Mr. Malleson?"

"I—I mean that I love you."

It was out at last. No "honey-tongued Anacreon" could have said more to express his meaning. She sat across the table from him. She had taken one hand from her cheek and was pressing it against her heart. Her eyes were downcast. Her face was flushed with excitement. Between her half-parted lips her white teeth shone. Her labored respiration was manifest even to Barry's untutored eyes. If Stephen Lamar had seen her in that moment and in that mood his impetuosity would have leaped its bounds. Barry was indeed fascinated but he was not propelled.

She lifted her eyes slowly to his.

"You—love me?" she asked.

"Yes, Mrs. Bradley."

It seemed a full minute that she sat there looking at him. Finally she said:

"Do you know what love is?"

And he replied:

"Why, certainly! I'm in it."

"Oh, but I mean do you really comprehend it?" And without waiting for a reply she went on impulsively: "Do you know how beautiful it is? how wonderful? how terrible? Do you?"

The questions came with such force and rapidity that Barry sat stunned and speechless. But it was not necessary that he should answer her; she did not expect a reply. She turned her face away from him and looked out, through the one dim window of her room, on the dead-wall of the building that fronted on the other street. What or whom did she see beyond that square of tempered light that her eyes grew moist and tender, and her face radiant with a light that only great love can bring? Not Barry, indeed! He still sat speechless, motionless, bewildered, utterly at a loss to know what to do or to say. The silence was broken at last by Mrs. Bradley herself. She sighed and turned back toward him.

"Pardon me!" she said. "I did not mean to be abrupt. And you are very good to tell me all this. But, you know, there are reasons why I can't listen to love-making—at least not yet."

Barry awoke. His mind grasped her meaning. Her widowhood was so recent. She must honor it. He honored her for respecting it.

"True!" he said. "I understand. I'll wait. I was only filing a lien anyway."

She smiled a little at that.

"Thank you!" she replied. "Now, to go back to Mr. Farrar. I've changed my mind about him. I think he ought to be encouraged, heartened, helped.

Do it, Mr. Malleson. Do all you can for him. Get every one else to do everything in their power to hold up his hands in this splendid fight he's making against aristocratic tyranny."

"I will, Mrs. Bradley. You can rest assured that my hat's in the ring for him. I'll go see him this morning and ask what I can do. No, I can't see him this morning. I promised Jane Chichester to take her out in my car to Blooming Grove, and I suppose I've got to do it, or I won't hear the end of it. But I'm with him, Mrs. Bradley, heart and soul."

She smiled again, and rose and gave him her hand.

"Thank you so much!" she said as she permitted her hand to remain in his grasp. "You are a real crusader."

Barry did not know just what a crusader was, but he did know that Mrs. Bradley smiled on him, and looked at him out of eloquent eyes, and he went out from her presence with such a buoyant sensation of pride and happiness as, in all his life before, he had never experienced.

After he had gone the secretary of the Socialist League turned again to her books and papers, but she did not resume her work. Instead she sat staring out through the dim window at the dead-wall across the area. What was there about a dead-wall that could, with such foreboding significance, so hold her gaze?

A woman entered her office and interrupted her musings. She turned toward her visitor impatiently, but not discourteously.

"I have not yet had an opportunity," she said, in answer to the woman's inquiry, "to take up your matter with the directors of the League."

"Then I hope you'll soon find one," was the reply. "You should know that it is of the utmost importance, both to your organization and to ours, that we should know definitely and without delay where you stand in the matter."

"There is no question about where we stand in the matter, Mrs. Dalloway. Our organization is wholly in sympathy with your movement. We should not be socialists if we were not. It's one of our cardinal doctrines that women are entitled to equal rights with men in everything."

"I know it is," replied the visitor sharply. "But theory is one thing and practice is another. I want to see your organization actually and definitely doing something for woman suffrage."

The secretary turned toward her books.

"I'll bring your matter before the board," she said, "at the earliest opportunity."

"Very well. See that you do."

And the society suffragist flounced out as abruptly as she had entered.

But Mrs. Bradley did not yet take up her tasks. She sat with her face in her hands in silent contemplation. After a little while she rose and began pacing up and down the floor of her office. It was apparent that for some reason she was greatly perturbed. Was it because Barry Malleson had made love to her? Poor Barry! He was as far from Mary Bradley's thought in that moment as her thought was from the golden streets of the New Jerusalem.

Finally she took down her hat and coat from the peg where they were hanging, put them on, and went out into the street.

At the first corner she met Stephen Lamar. He was in a jocose mood.

"'Where are you going, my pretty maid?'" he asked her.

"'I'm going to school, kind sir, she said.'"

"'May I go with you, my pretty maid?'"

"You would be turned out, and have to feed on grass," she answered him.

"But I would be feeding on clover while I was with you."

"Steve, I'm in no mood for pleasantries this morning. I want to be let alone."

"Where are you going?"

"It would not be profitable for you to know."

He looked at her curiously for a moment before speaking again. Finally he said:

"They gave your preacher a slap in the face last night."

"Yes. What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing. It's none of my business."

"It's the business of every fair and decent man in this city."

He bit his lip, but he did not reply in kind. He simply asked, for the third time:

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to see Mr. Farrar."

"What for?"

"To offer him my sympathy—and help."

"You're going on a fool's errand."

She did not resent the remark. She said quietly:

"It may be, but—I'm going."

"Mary, I don't approve of it."

"I'm not concerned about your approval."

"Have I no rights whatever?"

"None that interfere with my duties."

He made no further attempt to dissuade her. He knew how utterly useless it would be. He contented himself with saying:

"There'll be no peace in this city till that man is a thousand miles away."

And she replied: "It's war that this city needs, not peace."

He stood on the corner and watched her out of sight, but he made no attempt to follow her. That would have been rash and futile.

Threading her way along the busy thoroughfare, she passed through the heart of the city and turned into a cross street. At the end of the second block she was

in the shadow of the spire of Christ Church. Just beyond, across the lawn whitened by the first December snow, stood the rectory. Her heart began to fail her when she saw it. Her gait lessened; an unreasoning fear swept down upon her. It seemed to her that the snow on the lawn hid some tragic thing which she dared not pass by. She stopped, turned, and would have retraced her steps had not the high-pitched voice of a newsboy a block away come at that moment to her ears.

"*Mornin' Mail!* All 'bout the trouble in Christ Church!"

She clenched her gloved hands, faced the rectory, went up the walk, mounted the steps and rang the bell. A maid admitted her, announced her, and ushered her into the library. The rector came in from his study and greeted her cordially. Burdened and care-worn indeed he seemed to be, but not harassed nor dismayed. And when she saw that his faith was not dimmed nor his courage broken, the old diffidence came back upon her; the diffidence that always embarrassed her in his presence, and she could not talk. The errand she had had in mind seemed to have faded away.

"It's nothing much that I came for," she said brokenly.

"You do not need an errand when you come here," he assured her. "You are always welcome."

"But I believe it was about what your vestry did last—night."

"They did what I have long been expecting them to do. It was no surprise to me."

"And I wanted to tell you that if there is anything I can possibly do——"

She paused, and he came to her assistance.

"Thank you, Mrs. Bradley! You have already done heroic service for me. You have defended me in quarters where it was vitally important that I should not be misunderstood."

His commendation brought a new flush to her cheeks.

"I want to be still more helpful," she said. "Tell me what else to do."

He might have urged her, then, to accept his religion. The way was open for such an appeal, but he did not make it. It did not seem to him that the time was yet ripe. He simply replied:

"You are more than kind. There is little that any one can do. It is a matter now for the bishop."

"So Barry Malleson told me. He is very much concerned about you."

"He has been very faithful. While not believing fully in my theories he has, nevertheless, believed fully in me, and has stood up valiantly in my defense. I believe I am indebted to you for that, Mrs. Bradley. I am told that it was you who converted him to my cause. In fact he has told me so himself."

"He flatters me."

"He admires you. And it is not a long road which leads from admiration to love."

"Why do you say that, Mr. Farrar?"

"Because I want to bring you two together. Because such a friendship would be a practical exemplification of the doctrine I have been preaching."

"Mr. Farrar, my widowhood has been very recent."

"Pardon me if I have trespassed! In considering eternal verities I had forgotten temporal misfortunes."

"And I shall not marry again."

"Do not say that, Mrs. Bradley. You have, Providence permitting, many years to live. It is not quite meet that you should pass them in loneliness."

"To marry, one must first love."

"That's very true."

"And I—I must love—blindly!"

She brought out the word with desperate, yearning emphasis.

"And may you not love blindly?" he asked.

He could not fathom, at that moment, the mystery that lay back of her marvelous, grief-burdened eyes; but, long afterward, he remembered the way she looked upon him, and then he knew.

"God forbid!" she cried. Then, suddenly, the incongruity, the boldness, the unwomanliness of what she had been saying flashed upon her, and she covered her face with her hands. Seeing how great was her perturbation he sought to soothe her.

"Never mind!" he said; "we'll not discuss it any more now. Some other time perhaps."

She took her hands down from her eyes.

"No, not any other time," she declared. "Not ever again. I can't—bear it."

"As you wish. I'm so sorry to have distressed you. And you came to comfort me, and to offer help."

"I still offer it."

"And the time will come when you shall give it in even greater abundance than you have given it in the past."

She had already risen to go, and she took his proffered hand. His grasp was so firm and strong and friendly—and lingering. The door of the rectory closed behind her, and with colorless face and mist-covered eyes she groped her way to the street.

As she turned into the main thoroughfare she saw the Malleson car go by, and in it were Barry and Jane Chichester, each in a fur coat, bound presumably for Blooming Grove.

But Mary Bradley walked back to the Potter Building, to the narrow, second floor rear room which constituted the office of the Socialist League, hung her plain hat and coat on their accustomed peg, took out her books and papers, and applied herself to her tasks.

CHAPTER XII

THE FIRST CALAMITY

THREE days after the vestry meeting at which the resolution of dismissal was adopted, Westgate received a note from his fiancée asking him to call that evening. He was not slow to read between the lines of her message the fact that she desired to talk with him about the Farrar case. From the day of their Sunday walk the preceding September their differences concerning the trouble in the church had grown ever greater. The matter had been discussed between them many times and with great frankness, but of late the discussions had not been marked by that intimacy of feeling which had before characterized them. The controversy had not been unfriendly, but it had been fruitless and deadening. Nor was there any longer any hope of a reconciliation of opinion. While Ruth became more and more deeply absorbed in the regeneration of the church after the manner advocated by its rector, and gave increasingly of her time and ability to the crusade, Westgate, on the contrary, became more thoroughly convinced that the entire scheme was Utopian, impractical and visionary, and must end in disaster to the church, and in eventual defeat and humiliation for those who were engaged in it. To both of the lovers the situation was poignant and extreme. Westgate felt it the most deeply because for him there were no compensations. He had not the spiritual absorption in the contest that would lead to a certain satisfaction of the soul whether it were won or lost. His interest was simply that of a man convinced of the mighty economic

value of the Church to the community, and willing to fight for its integrity. To win his fight and thereby lose his sweetheart would be an empty and a bitter victory. To yield his honest convictions and play the hypocrite in order to retain her confidence and love would be cowardly and base. In no direction could he see light or hope. But with Ruth the case was different. Filled with religious zeal she was fighting for an ideal. That in itself was soul-satisfying. Even out of defeat would spring joy that she had fought. Her lover's approval, even his affection, was not a *sine qua non* to her. His image in her heart was often overshadowed by her absorption in the struggle for new life in the Church. The heroic figure of her rector, battling against odds, with splendid confidence in the justice of his cause, loomed ever larger in her mind as she went forth with him into the thick of the contest. Not that she was in any way disloyal to her lover. He was still her heart's high choice. But a greater thing than human love had entered her soul, a thing that called for sacrifice and sharp self-denial, even to the breaking, if necessary, of earth's dearest ties.

Westgate knew all this, so it was with no anticipation of a joyful meeting that he called upon her in response to her request.

There was no lack of cordiality in her greeting, but her face bore a look of determination that he had not often seen there. She did not waste time in explaining the purpose of her request.

"I asked you to come," she said, "because I have learned that it was you who prepared and offered the resolution in the vestry meeting calling for the dismissal of the rector."

"It was I," he replied.

"And I wanted to know whether you acted solely in the belief that it would be for the good of the church to have him go, or whether you were actuated by some other motive."

"I will tell you frankly. I had two motives for my conduct. In the first place I believed, and still believe, that I was acting for the best interests of Christ Church. In the second place it is my desire to secure Mr. Farrar's removal from this community so that you shall be outside the sphere of his influence."

"Why do you wish that?"

She did not seem to be surprised or vexed at the outspoken declaration of his purpose.

"Because," he replied, "I want to give you an opportunity to be restored to mental health; and I want to give myself an opportunity to regain so much of your confidence and affection as I have already lost."

"If it were true that you had lost them, Philip, would it not be your own fault?"

"No. I place the blame wholly on this man who has influenced you to my detriment."

"You misjudge him, Philip, and you misunderstand me. I have not been overpersuaded, and I am not abnormal. If it were true that I have lost my mental balance, and if you wanted to restore it, you have gone about it in quite the wrong way. To attempt to shatter a cause on which my heart is set, and to initiate a movement to discredit and disgrace the bravest and most high-souled and far-seeing man that ever preached the gospel of Christ from any pulpit in this city; that is not the way to quiet my mind, or to retain my confidence and affection."

She said it with determination, but not in anger, for her eyes were moist and her lip was trembling.

He, man that he was, was not able to hold himself in quite so complete control.

"Listen, Ruth!" he exclaimed. "This man who is now your ideal will some day be shattered into his original elements. Of this I have no doubt. If he will then remake himself on sound principles, there will still be in him vast possibilities for good. As it is, he is a menace to the Church and a destroyer of human

happiness. Pardon me, but I cannot look with equanimity on such a situation as faces me to-night."

"And it is a situation that is not necessary. It is all so very sad because it is so very unnecessary."

"What do you mean by that, Ruth?"

"I mean that if you would only see these things as I do; they are so perfectly plain; if you would only join me in this work; it is so inspiring; you would be such a help, such a power, a man to be honored and idealized. Oh, Philip! If I have loved you before, I would worship you then!"

She leaned toward him with clasped hands, flushed face, eyes that were burdened with yearning. He went over to her and put his arm about her shoulder as she sat.

"You are tempting me, Ruth. You know that I would give up everything that an honest man could give up for your sake. But if I were to stultify myself you would only despise me in the end."

"That is true, Philip. Whatever you do must be done in sincerity. You must believe in the cause."

"And that is so utterly impossible."

"And so grievously sad."

She sighed, and folded her hands in her lap, and looked away into immaterial distance. After a moment she added:

"But at least it is not necessary that you should openly and aggressively join Mr. Farrar's enemies."

"I should be less than a man," he replied, "to hold the opinions that I do and fail to oppose both him and his destructive schemes."

"And you are determined to crush him if you can?"

"I am determined to put an end, if possible, to his mischievous activities in this parish. No other course is open to me."

She lifted Westgate's arm from her shoulder, rose, crossed over to the window, held back the curtain, and

looked out into the night. When she turned back into the room it was apparent, from the look on her face, that her resolution was fixed.

"Philip," she said, "I believe it will be better for both of us to break our engagement to marry."

"Ruth, you are beside yourself!"

"No; I am quite sane, and I am very much in earnest. I have thought it all out, and I have made up my mind. We are better apart. I release you from any obligation on your part; I want to be released from any obligation on mine."

"Ruth! I can't do that. It's not necessary. It's absurd! Within the next six months this trouble will all have blown over. Must I do without you for a lifetime because of a flurry like this?"

He went toward her and would have taken her hands in his, but she moved away from him.

"No, Philip, it's not absurd. This trouble, as you say, may all have gone by in six months; but that doesn't matter. I am convinced to-night that we are so—so fundamentally different; so diametrically opposed to each other in all of our ideals concerning those things which are really worth while, that there never could be any harmony between us, never. It is fortunate that we have discovered it in time."

"Ah, but you mistake the true basis for harmony. It doesn't lie in having the same religious beliefs, or even in having the same ethical ideals. It lies in ——"

"Please don't, Philip! You only hurt me; and it's useless. My mind is completely made up, and I want to end it—now."

He looked at her for a long time without answering. He was debating with himself. Perhaps, after all, she was right. Perhaps it would be wise to give her rein to-night, to release her from her promise, and to win her back when she should be disillusioned, as in time she surely would be. And yet he could not quite

bring himself to the point of yielding. His silence filled her with apprehension. She looked at him with frightened eyes.

"Philip," she pleaded, "if you have ever loved me, you will let me go free."

Still he did not answer her.

"Philip! I demand it. It is my right as a woman."

"Very well. I submit. I will not hold you against your will. You are free."

She went up to him then and took both his hands in hers.

"Thank you, dear!" she said. "You are so good. You were always good to me. You have never been kinder to me than you have been to-night. You have never been dearer to me than you are at this moment."

Holding his hands thus she lifted her face to his and kissed him.

Buffeting the wind and snow as he journeyed homeward that night, Westgate thought little of the December blasts. His mind was filled with the tragic climax of his one great love. He knew that she looked upon her act as irrevocable, as the definite parting of ways that would never again be joined, and that he had no right to consider it otherwise. But, out of the clouds and darkness that surrounded him, one momentous fact thrust itself in upon his memory: in the midst of her cruelty to him she had kissed him. She had not declared that she would be his friend; she had not hoped that he would be happy; she had not promised to pray for him; she had not said any of the inane things that most girls feel it incumbent on them to say on such occasions, and for that he was duly grateful; but—she had kissed him.

The breaking of the engagement between Westgate and Ruth Tracy was more than a nine days' wonder. As the fact became known, and no attempt was made to conceal it, the parish was stirred anew. Every one

surmised correctly the causes that had led to it, and all were agreed that it was a most unfortunate ending to an ideal romance. Ruth's mother, when she was told of it, collapsed. For three days she housed herself and was inconsolable. She had grown to be very fond of Westgate. And for once Ruth's father dropped his reticence, and expressed himself in language which, though fluent, was not quite fit for Ruth to listen to, and certainly would have been entirely inappropriate for public repetition. For he, too, was fond of his junior partner, he had great respect for the young man's proved ability, and he had looked forward with intense satisfaction to his coming marriage with Ruth.

By no one was the news of the broken engagement received with approval, unless, possibly, by the rector of Christ Church. Not that he was indifferent to the disappointment or suffering of others; by no means. But the separation cleared the way for Ruth's progress toward higher realms of Christian service. It would permit her to give her undivided allegiance to the work in which he himself was so vitally interested. That it was a selfish consideration on his part did not occur to him. That the event was the first logical calamity, the first tragic result of an ill-considered crusade, or that it was the forerunner of still more tragic events which the future was bound to bring, never once crossed his mind. One of his former friends, commenting on the minister's failure to see the trend of circumstances, said that the man was living in a fool's paradise.

But the fact of the breaking of the engagement was food and drink to Jane Chichester. Not that she personally had anything at stake. But she loved a sensation. She would almost have given her chance of salvation to have heard the conversation between Westgate and Ruth on the night of the separation. From every one whom she met, either by chance or design, she gleaned what information she could concerning the

unhappy event; and, not even then filled to repletion, she resolved to call at the first decent opportunity on Ruth herself, and learn at first hand, if possible, the intimate details of the tragedy. Mary Bradley too was interested; and not only interested but deeply concerned. Not that she deprecated the breaking of the engagement. Quite the contrary. She had never felt that a woman with Ruth Tracy's ideals could be happy with a man like Westgate, apostle of conservatism, pledged to the perpetuation of the present iron-clad social order, a man toward whom her resentment had never waned since the day he had compassed her defeat in a court of law. But for Miss Tracy she had an ever-growing respect, and admiration, and fondness. While she regarded her as still bound, in a way, by religious superstition, and the conventions of society, she nevertheless gave her credit for having noble aspirations, and for seeking by every possible means to realize them. And especially did she give her credit for having cast off such a drag on her ambitions as Westgate was and always would have been. It was a fine and courageous thing to do, and more fine and courageous because she undoubtedly loved him. Mary Bradley felt that she wanted to tell her so; that she wanted to give her a word of encouragement and comfort and hope. In spite of many invitations from Ruth to do so, she had never yet called at the Tracy house. She had felt that such action would be not quite consistent, either with her social position or her present vocation. But the time had come now to cast these considerations aside, to visit Ruth Tracy in her home, to invade the precincts of aristocracy and conservatism, and carry courage and comfort to the "prisoner of hope" environed there by subtle and antagonistic forces.

So, one cold, clear December afternoon, she made her way to the unfamiliar neighborhood of Fountain Park. It was the same afternoon that Jane Chichester had chosen for her call on Ruth. Miss Chichester had

found her intended victim at home, and had sought, by various artifices, to draw from her the true story of the breaking of the engagement. But Ruth either did not or would not understand her visitor's desire, and the probability was each minute growing stronger that Miss Chichester would depart entirely barren of the information which she had come to secure. It was at this juncture that Mrs. Bradley was announced. Miss Chichester caught the name.

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed, in a stage whisper; "is it that socialist widow?"

Miss Tracy nodded.

"Then, for goodness' sake, let me escape."

"No, Jane, you stay right where you are."

By this time the maid was ushering the visitor into the presence of the other two women. It was not pleasing to Mary Bradley to find Miss Chichester there. The fact would interfere with if it did not entirely destroy the purpose of her errand. But she manifested neither surprise nor disappointment. She entered the room, not with as much grace, perhaps, but certainly with as much ease and composure as though she had all her life been accustomed to making her entry into drawing-rooms. She was received cordially by Ruth who was sincerely glad to see her, and coldly by Miss Chichester who would much rather have seen any one else in the city. There was some casual conversation, in which Miss Chichester only incidentally joined, and then, possibly through inadvertence, possibly by design, the action of the vestry in demanding the dismissal of the rector was referred to.

"I know you don't agree with me, Ruth," said Miss Chichester, "but, in my opinion, we shall never have peace in the parish till that man goes."

"And in my opinion," responded Ruth, "we shall never have righteousness nor real happiness in the parish until the church as a body accepts his views. What do you think, Mrs. Bradley?"

"I quite agree with you," replied the widow, quietly.

Miss Chichester would have taken anything from Ruth Tracy in the way of verbal opposition, without a shadow of resentment; but to be openly antagonized by this person who had presumed to force herself socially into one of the most exclusive drawing-rooms on the hill—she could not listen and hold herself completely in abeyance. However, she ignored the widow and addressed her forthcoming remark exclusively to Ruth.

"I should think, my dear," she said, "that with the sad experience you have recently had, which everybody says was a direct result of the trouble Mr. Farrar has got the church into, you would hesitate about believing that either righteousness or happiness could result from his schemes."

A flush came into Mrs. Bradley's cheeks, but she held her peace. She well knew that Miss Tracy was fully capable of fighting her own battles. Ruth showed no sign of resentment. Her face had paled slightly, but she spoke without feeling or excitement.

"You must remember, Jane," she said, "that, where one person may have suffered because of the upheaval in the church, a hundred have found hope and satisfaction in the gospel that is being preached to them."

"Oh," retorted Miss Chichester, "those people that come to church nowadays are merely sensation hunters. They come, and listen, and smack their lips, and go away just as irreligious and atheistic and destructive as they were before they came. Those are largely the kind of people who are encouraging Mr. Farrar to make this fight. Of course, I don't include you, dear."

"You include me, perhaps?" Mrs. Bradley smiled as she asked the question, and her white teeth shone.

"There's an old saying," replied Miss Chichester, "to this effect: 'If the shoe fits, put it on.'"

Mrs. Bradley laughed outright; not meanly, but merrily.

"I think it fits," she replied.

"Moreover," continued Miss Chichester, her temper rising with every word, "a scheme like Mr. Farrar's, that encourages people of no standing whatever to attempt to break into good society, and to seek companionship with our best young men, is a scheme that ought to be crushed."

It was perfectly apparent that after that declaration no *entente cordiale* could be either established or maintained among the three women present. Ruth looked worried, Mrs. Bradley bit her lip and did not answer, and Miss Chichester, after a moment of uncertainty, rose to go. She turned to Ruth.

"I'm so sorry for you, dear," she said, "even if it is all your own fault. I know how to sympathize with you, because my own heart is almost broken."

She gave her eyes a dab or two with her handkerchief, said good-bye to Ruth, ignored Mrs. Bradley, and departed.

"I'm extremely sorry," said the remaining guest, when the door had closed behind the first visitor, "to have come here and made trouble."

"Oh," replied Ruth, "I don't mind Miss Chichester. I have always known her. What worries me is that you may have taken her too seriously. You don't know, as I do, that her heart is so much better than her tongue."

"I think most people are really better than they seem. But Miss Chichester appears to have a deep personal grievance against me. I have heard of it before this. I don't fully understand it."

"Jane thinks you are trenching on her preserves."

"In the matter of Barry Malleson?"

"I believe so."

"Is she engaged to be married to him?"

"She says she is not, but she thinks she might be if it were not for your alluring influence over him."

Mrs. Bradley laughed a little before she replied.

"Poor Mr. Malleson! To be so beset. But if Miss Chichester is not engaged to him I do not see that I owe her anything." She turned suddenly to her hostess. "Miss Tracy, would you think it my duty to forbid Mr. Malleson to see me?"

"I don't know why it should be. Do you?"

"No. Only that I'm not in his class, that I have nothing against him, that he appears to be an extremely well-intentioned young man, and that his association with me, slight as it has been, has already subjected him to much criticism."

"Those are not good reasons, Mrs. Bradley. Barry cares nothing for criticism. The fact that he is well-intentioned prevents any unjust reflections upon you. And, so far as I am concerned, I should be delighted to see you become intensely and permanently interested in each other. As I view the matter, in the light of my present beliefs, I think it is just such relationships that modern society needs for its regeneration."

"Thank you! That is practically what Mr. Farrar said to me."

"Did he talk with you about Barry?"

"Incidentally."

"And he approved of Barry's interest in you?"

"He appeared to."

"I hope you will follow his advice, Mrs. Bradley."

But Mrs. Bradley evidently did not care to continue the discussion of this particular subject. At any rate she changed the topic of conversation abruptly by saying:

"I came to tell you how brave and wise I think you are, Miss Tracy."

Ruth looked up questioningly, and her visitor continued:

"I mean in the matter of breaking your engagement. I don't want to intrude into your personal affairs, but I felt that I must tell you how greatly I admire your courage."

"You are very kind."

"So many of us choose the easiest way, the most delightful path. It is splendid once in a while to see a woman govern her conduct by high principles and a stern sense of duty, though it requires great sacrifice."

"I appreciate what you say, though I am not fully deserving of your commendation. I cannot feel that the sacrifice was so very great on my part, but I am intensely sorry for him. He is so sincere and good."

"You mean Mr. Westgate?"

"Yes."

"I have no sympathy ——" she checked herself suddenly and then added: "We'll not talk about it any more. I simply felt that if I could say but one word that would give you the least bit of courage and hope, I wanted to say it."

"You have cheered and encouraged me."

"Thank you! Now let's talk about something else."

When Mrs. Bradley chose to talk she was an interesting and entertaining talker. And she was in a talkative mood to-day. The conversation having turned on her own vocation, she told about her present work, and about the ambitions and ideals of the socialistic group with which she was connected. Mentally alert, and eager to hear and to read, she had readily imbibed and easily assimilated the doctrines of the school of Marx and Bebel, and their more vigorous if less illustrious followers. These doctrines appealed to her reason and to her sense of social justice. She rejoiced in the effort to raise the economic level of the working class, and, by the same token, to drag down those pompous ones who ruled by reason of unjust wealth. She believed in the necessity for revolutionizing the social order. It was a part of her work to sow the seeds of such a revolution, and she explained by what methods that work was accomplished. Miss Tracy was not only interested in the recital, she was fascinated. The story was dramatic and absorbing.

"But," she said finally, "you must in some way, Mrs. Bradley, connect it up with religion, or it will come to naught in the end."

"I am not so sure of that," was the reply. "I've been studying on that part of it, and reading what little I can find to read, and listening, too, whenever I can hear it talked about."

"I am sure you must get great help from Mr. Farrar's sermons. I'm so glad to see you in church every Sunday morning."

"Yes; I come quite regularly. I'm always interested in the sermon."

"Mr. Farrar is very grateful to you for giving him such splendid assistance in his fight."

"I try to help him. I think he's a very wise and good man."

"He is, indeed. You can rest assured of that."

"And being so wise and good he deserves to be very happy."

"I think he almost glories in this warfare for righteousness."

"He should be happy and satisfied in all of his relations in order to do his best work."

"I presume he is thus happy and satisfied."

"I don't know. I've been told that his wife is not in sympathy with him; that she doesn't understand him and doesn't appreciate him. If that is so it's a pitiful situation."

"If it is so, it is certainly unfortunate, but I do not quite credit that story."

Mrs. Bradley went on as though she had not heard.

"A man such as he is ought to have a wife of the same mind with him. She ought to be one with him in everything. She ought to give herself up completely to him and to his work. And she would have a rich reward, because I believe such a man as he is could love intensely."

She had been looking away into some glowing

distance as she spoke, but now she turned her eyes full upon her hostess.

"I have known of marriages like that," she said, "and they have been perfect; perfect, such as your marriage to Mr. Westgate never could have been; such as your marriage, some day, to some other man must be, for you deserve it, and you must have it. A woman who loses an experience like that loses the better part of her life."

She spoke with such intense earnestness that her listener was startled, and hardly knew how to reply. There was a moment's pause and then Ruth said, feeling even while she said it that she was saying the wrong thing:

"I suppose your own experience as a wife leads you to say that, Mrs. Bradley."

"My own experience? Oh, no! My own marriage was a very commonplace affair. People who are as poor as we were, always hard at work, straining to make both ends meet, have little time for love-making. Besides, my husband was not a man for any woman to idolize."

If Ruth was surprised at this frank avowal, she succeeded in concealing her surprise. It occurred to her that possibly the woman was primitive, and that her finer sensibilities had not yet been fully developed. But that she was genuine and well-intentioned there could be no doubt.

"That was unfortunate," replied Ruth. "Every marriage should have for its basis mutual and whole-souled affection."

"Yes. That is true. I neither received it, nor had it. And I feel, somehow—it was my fault of course, for I didn't have to marry him—but I feel somehow as if I'd been robbed of that to which every woman is entitled."

It was a delicate subject, and Ruth hardly knew how to handle it. But a thought came into her mind and she gave expression to it.

"It's not too late yet for you to have that experience, Mrs. Bradley. I am sure your heart can still be profoundly stirred by some great love."

"Oh, I know that, Miss Tracy. I know that. But to love without being loved in return—that's torture; it's not happiness."

"And why shouldn't you be loved in return?"

"I don't know. Oh, I don't know. Do you think, do you imagine, by the wildest stretch of hope and fancy do you conceive it to be possible that my love should be returned?"

She had risen to her feet. Her voice was tremulous with excitement. Her eyes had in them that appealing look that had pierced to the depth of Barry Malleson's heart. But she did not wait for Miss Tracy to answer her. She turned abruptly toward the door.

"I must go now," she said. "It's already dusk. And it's a long way home."

When she reached the hall she faced about. There was something she still wanted to say.

"Don't take it to heart, Miss Tracy. Your own broken romance, I mean. He was never the man for you. You have ideals. He has none. There are a thousand women with whom he will be just as well satisfied as he would have been with you. But for you there is but one man in all the world. And when he comes to you you will know him, and you will love him, and you will be supremely, oh, supremely happy. For there's nothing so beautiful, so wonderful, so heavenly in a woman's life as this love for the one man, if only he loves her."

That it came from her heart as well as from her lips, this message of hope and comfort, there could be no shadow of doubt. Her eyes were full of it, her countenance was aglow with it. But what lay back of it in her own life's experience that should give it such eloquent and passionate voice?

Before Ruth could recover sufficiently from her sur-

prise to reply intelligently the woman had said good-bye and was gone. She hurried down the pavement in the December dusk, looking neither to the right nor left. The night was cold, the air was frosty, the stars were beginning to show in the clear sky. At the corner of Grove Street and Fountain Lane Stephen Lamar met her. He came upon her suddenly and she was startled.

"You shouldn't have frightened me so," she said.

"I was waiting for you," he replied. "I knew you were in the Tracy house."

"How did you know it?"

"A socialist friend of mine saw you go in and told me."

"And what business was it of your socialist friend where I went?"

"To speak frankly, Mary, they don't like your consorting so freely with people of that class: this Tracy girl, and the fighting parson, and half-baked young Malleson and others of that ilk."

"I've told you before, Steve, that when your crowd wants my job they can have it. I'll get out any day. But—I shall choose my own friends."

"They don't want you to throw up your job. In fact you're indispensable. But it's because you are so important that your association with these people is injurious to the cause."

She half stopped and faced him.

"Steve," she said, "why did you come up here to meet me?"

It was such an abrupt breaking off of the former topic of conversation that Lamar replied awkwardly:

"Why, I—I wanted to tell you this."

"What else did you want to tell me?"

"I wanted to tell you that I heard to-day that you are likely to marry young Malleson. He's been asked if there's an engagement, and he doesn't deny it. The thing has got on my nerves. I felt that I couldn't

sleep without getting an assurance from you that there's nothing in it."

"Let me see. I told you once that if you would do something for me you should have your reward."

"Yes."

"And you haven't done it."

"The job is under way. You can't do a thing of that kind in a day. The agreement with the men expired less than a week ago."

"You think you will bring what I wish to pass?"

"I surely do."

"Then you needn't be afraid of Barry Malleson. A thousand of his kind will not keep your reward from you."

"Thank you, Mary. I knew all along that you were only pulling the wool over his eyes, but this infernal story to-day got me going."

"Dismiss it from your mind. How far are you going to walk with me?"

"To Main Street. I promised to meet Bricky Hoover at the Silver Star at half-past five."

"Good! I shall take a car from there to the foot of Factory Hill."

An automobile turned the corner slowly within three feet of them as they walked. A woman, sitting alone in the tonneau, looked out at them sharply, and turned her head to watch them as she went by. It was Miss Chichester. They both recognized her.

"A friend of yours," said Lamar.

"A friend of a friend of mine," was the reply. "She has found a new reason for poisoning his mind concerning me."

"What is that?"

"I have been seen walking with Steve Lamar on a secluded street after nightfall."

He laughed. "That is indeed an offense," he said. "Let us do something that will enlarge it into a scandal."

"For instance?"

"I might kiss you when I leave you at the corner."

She turned toward him as she walked.

"Do you remember," she asked him, "that story of Judas who betrayed his Master with a kiss?"

"From the Christian fable? Yes."

"Well, the man whom I kiss is marked for swift destruction."

"I would suffer the penalty and rejoice in it."

"You are not the man."

She stopped abruptly at the crossing, said good-night to him, and turned away before he could recover from the shock of his surprise. It was not the first time she had closed a conversation with him suddenly and left him mystified, and wondering at the meaning of her words. He stood on the corner and watched her out of sight, and then, with mind ill at ease, he turned in at the Silver Star.

Mary Bradley hurried on down Main Street, but she did not take a car. She was in a mood for walking, cold as the night was. At the first corner she turned, went a block to the west, and thence followed a residence street running parallel with Main. It was not yet six o'clock but the street was practically deserted. It was a good neighborhood, however, and she was not timid. Both Hazzard and Emberly, vestrymen of Christ Church, lived on this street. She knew the Emberly house in the next block. As she approached it a man descended the steps of it and started away in the direction in which she was going. She thought, as she saw him in the shadow, that it was Lamar. He was of nearly the same height, build and carriage, and it was easy for her to be mistaken. But when, instinctively, he turned his face back toward her, feeling that some one was following him whom he knew, she saw at once that it was the rector of Christ Church. He waited until she reached him, and they walked on together. He too was going in the direction of Factory Hill. A

sick call which he had been prevented all the afternoon from reaching, must be made before dinner time. He was in a cheerful mood. Emberly had given him encouraging news. He told it to Mrs. Bradley as they went along. But, for some reason which he could not understand, she was more than usually reticent, and when she spoke it was in monosyllables. It was not a sullen reticence, but rather a physical inability, as though she were laboring for breath. Five blocks farther down she said:

"I turn here and cross the foot-bridge. It's much nearer for me."

"I will go with you," he replied.

"But it will take you out of your way."

"It doesn't matter. Besides, it's an unfrequented route, and you shouldn't go alone at this hour."

She made no further objection, and he turned with her, and they came presently to the end of the foot-bridge. It was a suspension bridge, narrow and unstable, swung across the gorge above the Malleson mills to accommodate employees of that concern. The wire cables that supported it hung so low that at the center they were scarcely knee-high above the floor, and that was covered with ice. It rocked and swayed with them as they walked upon it. Before they were half-way across Mary Bradley's foot slipped. She sank to her knee and would have fallen over the side of the bridge had not the minister caught her, flung his arm around her waist and helped her to her feet.

"You're not hurt?" he asked.

"No—except—my ankle."

She was trembling with fright, and, when she tried to move on, the weakness of her injured foot made the attempt too hazardous and she hesitated. Two-thirds of the icy bridge had yet to be crossed.

"Shall we go back?" he asked.

"No," she replied, "we will go on."

The minister's arm was still about her waist. It was

a wise precaution. If it had not been there she would surely have plunged to the bottom of the gorge before the remainder of the crossing could have been accomplished. She wondered afterward why, with that first taste of an earthly heaven sweet upon her soul's lips, she had not, herself, sought life's end. At the farther end of the bridge he released her, and they turned and looked back over the perilous way they had come. Across the stream, in a circle of light thrown into the street by a swinging arc lamp, stood an automobile. A woman, sitting alone in the tonneau, swathed in furs, was looking over at them. They had not heard the car, they had not until that moment seen it, it was too far away now for its occupant to be identified. But Mary Bradley knew, nevertheless, who had seen them.

"It was a dangerous crossing," said the rector as they turned up the hill, and the car across the gorge moved on.

"It was a rapturous crossing," said Mary Bradley in her heart as, clinging to her companion's arm, she limped weakly toward her home. But, if she had been reticent before the accident, she was silent now. The power of speech seemed almost to have left her. The minister respected her mood and did not question her. Doubtless pain or weariness or embarrassment had its effect upon her, and he did not choose to be intrusive. He left her at her door, and heard the querulous voice of the old woman of the house in impatient questioning as he turned away.

Mary Bradley gave brief greeting to her mother as she entered, but she went hurriedly and sat by the window in the darkened living-room. She watched the stalwart figure of the rector of Christ Church until it was lost in the shadows of the dimly-lighted street. She pressed her face against the pane and peered into the darkness after the last vestige of an outline or a motion had been swallowed up.

Her mother called to her from the kitchen.

"Ain't you comin' to your supper, Mary?"

"Yes, mother."

But she did not come. She still sat with her face against the window, staring into the night.

Again the old woman called to her, impatiently.

"Why don't you come? Your supper's gittin' cold."

"I'm coming, mother."

Still she did not come.

What was it in the darkness, in the sweet twilight beyond the darkness, in the red glory of some forbidden morning, that drew and held her eyes of clay?

CHAPTER XIII

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

On the morning following Mrs. Bradley's visit to Ruth Tracy there was unusual activity at the Chichester home. It was confined wholly to Miss Chichester. She was in a high state of excitement and anticipation. She ordered her car early from the garage and started down-town. She stopped at a large department store and called up Barry Malleson's office by telephone. But Barry was not yet down. She wandered aimlessly about the store for fifteen minutes, and then tried again to speak to Barry. Still he had not reached the mills. Then she reëntered her car and was taken to a big office building a few blocks away. She left the elevator at the sixth floor and entered the anteroom of the law-offices of Tracy, Black and Westgate. Mr. Westgate was in, but he was busy. Would she wait, or would she see Mr. Tracy who was just at present disengaged? She did not care to see Mr. Tracy; her errand was particularly with Mr. Westgate, and she would wait. She decided to try again to reach Barry. This time she was successful. The office telephone girl announced that he was there. So Miss Chichester sat at a table with a desk 'phone in her hands and entered into conversation with Barry.

"I am here," she said, "at Phil's office, and I want you to come up here. It's very important."

It was apparent that Barry both demurred and failed to understand, for Miss Chichester added after a moment:

"At Phil Westgate's office. You must come up, Barry. It won't take ten minutes, and I'm sure you can spare me that much time. Besides, it's a matter of very serious importance to you. Please come right away."

Evidently Barry yielded, for she said, after a brief interval of silence:

"Thank you so much! I'll wait right here."

She hung up the receiver, and went and sat on the window ledge and looked down into the street. She saw Barry as he turned the corner and crossed over toward the office building. When he entered the room a moment later she drew him mysteriously to a bench in a corner.

"No," she said, in reply to Barry's question, "I can't tell you what it is; not until we see Phil. I know you'll be surprised, and maybe you'll be shocked, and I want you to have the benefit of Phil's judgment on it at once."

But Phil was still engaged. Other clients had come, in the meantime, to see him, and were sitting about the anteroom waiting. Barry tapped the floor with the toe of his shoe impatiently.

"I can't sit around here all the morning," he said. "I've got work to do down at the office; important work. You must realize, Jane, that I'm vice-president of the company and that all matters of magnitude pass through my hands."

"I'm sure it can't be much longer, Barry. Those people have been in there now, to my certain knowledge, at least half an hour."

But he was still ill at ease, and finally he went over to the telephone girl, and asked her to call in to Westgate that Mr. Barry Malleson and Miss Chichester were waiting to see him, and that Mr. Malleson was in great haste. Word came back immediately that Westgate would see them in a moment. And it was really less than five minutes when his door opened and Judge

Bosworth came out followed by Colonel Boston, Mr. Hughes, Mr. Cochrane and Mr. Rapalje.

Miss Chichester's curiosity was so greatly aroused as to the meaning of this meeting of vestrymen that she came near losing sight, for the moment, of the purpose of her own errand. But when she was once in Westgate's room with Barry, there was no delay in making the object of her visit known.

"I've brought Barry with me," she said, "because I want him to hear the disclosures I am about to make—they so deeply concern him—and because he will need good, sound advice the moment he hears them."

For the first time Barry looked worried.

"I don't know what she's got up her sleeve, Phil; honest I don't. I haven't said a word to her that she could construe as a promise of any kind."

There was a twinkle in Westgate's eye.

"I'm afraid you're in bad, Barry," he said. "Jane has a mighty determined look on her face this morning."

"But, Phil, old man, you know very well that I wouldn't for the world deceive any woman; and what's more Jane has never ——"

But at that point Jane herself interrupted him.

"Oh, Barry, you silly fellow! It's a warning I want to give you, not an ultimatum. And Phil's a lawyer and he can tell you what to do. I always knew it, but I had no proof. Now I have the evidence. I saw it with my own eyes."

"Saw what?" asked Westgate.

"Saw him hug and kiss her."

Barry started from his chair.

"I never did!" he exclaimed. "I never even tried to. Jane, you've made a terrible mistake!"

"Now, Barry," said Westgate, "just restrain yourself for a few minutes and we'll ask Miss Chichester to explain. Jane, will you please begin at the beginning and tell us the entire story?"

"Certainly! You know I went yesterday afternoon to call on Ruth Tracy, and while I was there this person came in."

"What person? Who?" asked Westgate.

"Why, that socialist widow."

"Mrs. Bradley?"

"Yes; and she said some impertinent things and I got up and left."

"And what happened then?" asked Westgate, tipping back in his office chair, putting his thumbs into the armholes of his vest, and trying hard to look serious.

"Well, it wasn't twenty minutes later that I was going up-town, and just as my car turned into Grove Street I saw this person, not three feet away from me, walking in a most clinging and confidential way with Stephen Lamar, the socialist and anarchist and atheist."

"But," inquired Westgate, "where does Barry get into the plot?"

"He doesn't get into it directly," replied Miss Chichester; "but it concerns him seriously. I want him to know what kind of a person this is he's been running after."

Then Barry spoke up.

"Mrs. Bradley isn't engaged to marry me," he said. "I don't know why she hasn't got a right to walk on the street with Stephen Lamar or any one else if she wants to."

"That isn't the point, Barry," protested Miss Chichester. "The point is that you haven't got a right to walk on the street with her, or haunt her office, or commend her beauty, after you know what she's done."

"Why," said Barry, "I don't think it's so very bad for her to be seen on the street with this man. Maybe it wasn't her fault that he was with her. I don't think I would deprive her of my friendship on that account, Jane."

"Oh, but wait! You haven't heard it all yet," ex-

claimed Miss Chichester. "Wait till I tell you the rest, and then let me hear you dare to defend her, Barry Malleson."

"Proceed," said Westgate soberly.

"Well, I made up my mind that things weren't right, and that I'd see it out. So I had Albert drive downtown again. I knew that those Factory Hill people usually cross the foot-bridge instead of going around, so I gave them time to get there, and then we drove up Brook Street, past the entrance to the foot-bridge. Sure enough they were just going across. I had Albert stop the car so I could get a good square look at them. They were so interested in each other that they didn't see or hear us. And now what do you think?"

She turned first to Westgate and then to Barry to prepare them for the awful disclosure she was about to make. Her question was in the nature of a shock-absorber.

"This is getting serious," said Westgate, straightening up. "Are you sure it was Mrs. Bradley?"

"Positively certain!"

"And Stephen Lamar?"

"I couldn't be mistaken."

"Barry, have you any questions you desire to ask in order to test the witness's knowledge before she makes the final disclosure?"

"I don't see that what she's saying concerns me particularly," replied Barry. "I don't object to Mrs. Bradley having company home. It's rather a lonesome route across the bridge and up the hill. She ought to have somebody with her, going that way after dark."

"But," protested Jane, "think whom she chose to go with her. A man who isn't a fit companion for men, let alone for women."

"I don't think much of his theories," replied Barry, "but I never heard that he was positively bad."

"Barry Malleson! What do you call a bad man,

I'd like to know? Why, this man flouts religion, and denounces the Church, and preys on society, and ——"

"Well, Jane," interrupted Westgate, "suppose we put all that aside for the moment, and you go on and tell us what you saw at the bridge."

"Yes. Well, I saw them start across the bridge together, and before they got half-way over they stopped and—really, this isn't very nice to tell."

"Probably not," said Westgate, "but we can't tell whether or not it was very nice to do until we hear what it was they did."

"Well, if you force me to tell it, why, I saw him put his arm around her waist, and pull her close up to him and—and kiss her."

"You astonish me!" exclaimed Westgate. "This thing was done in the early evening, under the glare of the electric lamp, in full view of any person who might be passing?"

"Exactly! It was scandalous, Phil. And they weren't satisfied with doing it once; they repeated it, and then she actually walked the rest of the way across the bridge with his arm around her waist. Barry Malleson, what do you think of that?"

"I don't know," replied Barry, uncertainly, "that it has anything to do with me."

It was apparent, nevertheless, that the news had impressed him profoundly. And to that extent at least Miss Chichester had made her point.

"But you do know," she persisted, "that a woman who conducts herself so scandalously is not a proper person for you to associate with. Phil will tell you so, won't you, Phil? He'll tell you that it's dangerous. That you're likely to get caught in the trap of an adventuress."

Westgate turned soberly to Barry.

"If what Jane tells us is true," he said, "and I have no particular reason to doubt her word, you've been skating on very thin ice, young man, very thin ice."

"Thank you, Phil!" exclaimed Miss Chichester. "But you must do more than warn him; you must stop him. You're a lawyer. You can get out an injunction, or a writ of habeas corpus or something, and compel her to keep away from him."

"Why," responded Westgate, "I think it's a question of his keeping away from her. And Barry's own good sense, and sober judgment, and quick wit, will control him to that extent at least. Won't it, Barry?"

But Barry was still reluctant to renounce the charming widow offhand at the behest of her rival, or at the suggestion of the gentleman learned in the law.

"I won't jump before I'm ready," replied Barry. "I'll find out more about this thing first. I'll ask Mrs. Bradley about it."

"Barry! Can't you believe what I tell you? When I saw it with my own eyes?"

Miss Chichester was growing more appealingly impatient. But Barry still shook his head incredulously.

"I'll believe it when she tells me it's so," he replied. "You might have been deceived in some way. And maybe if it is so it wasn't her fault. I'll ask her."

Then Westgate again intervened.

"If you take my advice," he said, "you'll do nothing of the kind. If she can't make up a plausible excuse, she's not the woman I take her to be. Now, my suggestion would be —— Have you told anybody else about this, Jane?"

"Not a soul," replied Miss Chichester, promptly.

"Then don't. Don't say a word. Keep the whole thing under cover. Don't either of you mention it to any one, least of all to Mrs. Bradley. I'll put a detective on the case. If we find out that Lamar is actually making love to the widow, with her permission, we'll put the facts before Barry in such a convincing way that he'll have to accept them, and wind up his romance."

Westgate brought his fist down on the table with

such positive and conclusive effect that there appeared to be no more to say; and his callers, feeling that the interview was at an end, rose to their feet.

"I'll take your advice," said Miss Chichester, "but I'm sure you'll find out that I was right."

Barry did not dissent from Westgate's plan. His mind was, by this time, in such a whirl that he had not the ability to dissent from anything. He went out into the street, and started back toward the mill. Miss Chichester offered to take him in her car. She pleaded with him to go with her. But for once he was resolute. He would walk. When he reached the narrow street that led to the mill, he did not turn in there. He kept on down Main Street till he reached the Potter Building. Again he ignored the elevator and mounted the stairs. He had not promised to take Westgate's advice, and refrain from interviewing Mrs. Bradley. Every succeeding step that he had taken in his journey from the lawyer's office had but added to his determination to find out for himself, from original sources, how much if any of Jane Chichester's remarkable story was true.

Mrs. Bradley was in, and she was alone. Her greeting was more cordial, her smile more alluring, her eyes more fascinating as she turned them on her visitor, than they had ever been before. Barry did not beat about the bush. It was not his way. He went straight to the heart of his errand.

"I've heard something this morning," he said, "and I want to know if it's a fact."

"Am I in a position," she inquired, "to tell you whether or not it is a fact?"

"If you're not," he replied, "I don't know who is."

She smiled again, showing her perfect teeth.

"Very well," she said. "Go on. If it's not one of the secrets of the League, I may be able to tell you."

"It has nothing to do with the League, Mrs. Bradley. It concerns you personally—and me."

"Has some one been forecasting your deplorable future?"

"That's exactly it."

"Well, what did you hear? Let's know the worst."

"I heard that last night, on the Malleson foot-bridge, you permitted Stephen Lamar to walk across the bridge with his arm around your waist, and to kiss you twice. Is that so?"

She did not answer him. Her face grew scarlet, and then pale. Her effort to breathe was as labored as it had been on the bridge the night before. But her eyes looked him through and through. He weakened and winced and cowered under them. He began to frame apologies.

"I guess, maybe," he stammered, "that I had no right to—to ask——"

"You had a perfect right," she interrupted him. "You have made love to me honorably. If another man makes love to me with my permission, you have a right to know it."

Barry began to breathe more freely.

"I—I thought you'd look at it that way," he said.

"Yes, that's the right way. Now let us see. You've been told that I crossed the foot-bridge last evening with Stephen Lamar, and that he had his arm around me, and kissed me?"

"Yes, that's the story; but I didn't——"

"Never mind that; let me tell you. Stephen Lamar did not cross the foot-bridge with me last evening. He has never crossed the foot-bridge with me. He did not have his arm around my waist. He has never had his arm around my waist. He did not kiss me. He has never kissed me. Is that sufficient?"

"That's more than sufficient," replied Barry, his face aglow with satisfaction. "I knew it was a mistake. I'll tell——"

"No!" The word came from her lips with sharp vehemence. "You'll tell nobody, on pain of for-

feiting my friendship. Let them think it. Let them say it."

"But," protested Barry, weakly, "it ought to be denied."

"What does it matter?" she replied. "You know it's a lie, because I've told you so. What difference does it make who else believes it or disbelieves it? I'm beholden to no one for my character or conduct. You must not deny the story. I beg you not to deny the story."

She reached her hand across the table and laid it caressingly on his. She turned her luminous eyes on him, eloquent with voiceless pleading. What could he do but promise to keep silent? By the same token he would as readily have promised her to wear a wooden gag in his mouth all the days of his life. There were few things which in that moment he would not have promised her at her request. He went out from her presence, as he had gone out on the occasion of his last preceding visit at her office, treading on air. In the distance, as he walked up the street, he caught a glimpse of Miss Chichester speeding onward in her car. He lifted the tips of his gloved fingers to his lips, and blew a kiss in her direction.

"What's the meaning of this unusual gallantry?" asked an acquaintance who was passing.

"It means," replied Barry, "that it's better to kiss some women at a distance of two blocks than at a distance of two inches."

But another man who saw Barry's salute said to himself: "Malleson's fool is going daft for sure."

CHAPTER XIV

THE BISHOP'S DILEMMA

On the third Sunday in December the Right Reverend the Bishop of the diocese made his annual visitation to the parish of Christ Church.

The rector had a large class to present to him for confirmation. Not unusually large, perhaps, but the numbers were sufficient to indicate that there was no material falling off in the personal accessions to the church. It was noted, however, that among the candidates there were few people of the wealthy class. Most of those received into membership came from the families of wage-workers. Nor were the accessions from this class as large as the rector had hoped and expected they would be. The great majority of those who came to hear him preach, who sympathized with him, who even fought for him, remained, nevertheless, outside the organized body of the church. People whose lives are given over to manual labor, especially in the cities, are characteristically cautious. Through centuries of exploitation, of deception, of promises unfulfilled, they have learned to be on their guard. They are not quick to attach themselves to any body, religious or secular, to which they are to assume new and undefined obligations. Nevertheless, the bishop had no fault to find with the class presented to him for confirmation, nor with the congregations that greeted him.

In his honor, and as significant of their attitude toward the church as distinguished from their attitude

toward the rector, those who had, during the last few months, deserted their pews, were out in full force. Their attendance, coupled with the attendance of a throng of people of the humbler class, taxed the church edifice to its capacity. Many were obliged to stand throughout the service and did so willingly. No reference was made by the bishop in his sermon, or from the chancel, to the troubles in the parish. It seemed to him that it would be the part of wisdom on his part, so far as his public utterances were concerned, to ignore them at this time. He was a guest of Mrs. Tracy. Ever since his elevation to the bishopric she had entertained him at her house on the occasions of his annual visitations to the parish. The bishop felt quite at home in the Tracy family. He was especially fond of Ruth. He had confirmed her. He had seen her grow into helpful and religious young womanhood. She was the fairest flower in his whole diocese. Nor was Mr. Tracy left entirely out of account. He was not a churchman, that is true, and his name was rarely mentioned in matters connected with the episcopal visitation. But he liked the bishop, and the bishop liked him, and they had many an enjoyable visit with each other before the library fire of an evening, after the other members of the family had retired for the night. The bishop was fond of a good cigar, and Mr. Tracy provided him with the choicest brands. Moreover the bishop was getting up in years; his duties were onerous and his work was wearing, and his physician had advised him, on occasion, to take something before retiring that would induce sound and restful sleep. Mr. Tracy knew exactly what would best answer that purpose, and he provided it. It was small wonder, therefore, that the Tracy house came to be regarded as a kind of episcopal residence during the period of the annual visitation.

It was here that the bishop invited the vestry to meet with him on the Monday evening following con-

firmation, for the purpose of discussing specifically the charges against the rector, and generally the unhappy situation in the parish. It must not be supposed that he had failed to inform himself, privately, before coming to the city, of the exact nature of the trouble. It would have been unwise not to have done so. Nor was he likely to remain in ignorance concerning the opinions of certain parishioners now that he was here. A succession of callers, mostly of the wealthier class, who had had the privilege of a personal acquaintance with him, occupied his attention during the greater part of the day. In the early afternoon Barry Malleson came to see the bishop. He felt that his voice might be potent in obtaining episcopal favor for the rector toward whom his loyalty had increased day by day. He was ushered into the reception room and told that the bishop, who was engaged with a caller in the library, would see him in a few minutes. While he was waiting, who should come in but Jane Chichester. She was rejoiced to find Barry there. It was an opportunity that she had been seeking, and that he had been avoiding, for a full week.

"I'm so glad you're here," she said. "I've been wanting awfully to see you, and it's been ten whole days since I've had the remotest glimpse of you. Where in the world have you been?"

"Why," replied Barry, "we've been pretty busy down at the mill lately."

"But I've called you up a dozen times and they always tell me you're out."

"That's the fault of Miss Bolckom, the telephone girl. I must speak to her about it."

If the truth must be told, Barry had spoken to her about it, suggesting mildly that if any one whose voice resembled that of Miss Chichester should call him up, and he should unfortunately happen to be out, why, she needn't go to the trouble of having him paged. Miss Bolckom, being an ordinarily clever girl, had

understood perfectly. Hence Barry's unaccountable absences.

But Miss Chichester had him now alone and at her mercy.

"What I wanted to see you about," she explained, "is that I've come to the conclusion that Phil Westgate is just making game of both of us. I've called him up every day and he says his detectives haven't discovered the first thing."

"Give 'em time," suggested Barry. "You know Rome wasn't built in a day."

"They've had plenty of time. He just doesn't want them to discover anything. I'm not going to wait another day. If he doesn't find something to-morrow to confirm what I saw, I'm going to make my story public. I'm going to spread it from one end of the town to the other. I'm going to show that woman up for what she is, and if Ruth Tracy and Mr. Farrar want to patronize her after that, they'll do it at their peril. Of course you won't have anything more to do with her, will you, Barry?"

Barry opened his eyes wide and was silent. Then a happy thought came to him, and he said:

"If any woman lets Steve Lamar hug and kiss her, she mustn't expect to associate with me."

"Of course not; nor with any one else who has any self-respect or any regard for public opinion. But to-morrow's the last day I'm going to keep my mouth shut, and Phil can like it or not as he chooses. I never did think he was as much of a lawyer as some people claim he is, anyway."

"Why," replied Barry, "the only thing I've got against Phil is that he's leading this fight on the rector. Otherwise he's a very decent fellow, with fair, average ability."

"Are you here to see the bishop, Barry?"

"I thought I'd drop in and have a chat with him. The bishop and I are old friends."

"I came to see him, too. I always come to see him when he's here on his visitation. I think he's such a dear man."

"He's a very agreeable fellow."

"If one were going to get married wouldn't it be too sweet for anything to have the bishop marry you?"

"It wouldn't be a bad idea, that's so."

"And he's getting along in years, and his health is not very good, and I did hear some talk about his resigning. Wouldn't it be too bad if he should leave the episcopate before one is ready to get married?"

Barry began to have an uncomfortable feeling. He didn't know just why. It was not the first time that Miss Chichester had discussed the subject of matrimony with him, and his equanimity had never before been ruffled by it, but now he saw a cloud on the horizon.

"Oh, well," he said, "there'll be other bishops."

"But this one is so adorable," persisted Miss Chichester. "And what with all the trouble in the parish and everything, he may never come here again. Barry, when that person comes out, whoever it is, we'll go in and see the bishop together, won't we?"

Barry took a firmer grasp on his hat and cane, and glanced anxiously toward the hall door as if to make sure of his means of escape in the event of an emergency.

"Why," he stammered, "I wanted to see the bishop alone,—a—confidentially, you know. A matter of some importance."

"But we shouldn't have any secrets that we keep from each other, Barry. And I'm sure that if we go to the bishop together and agree on what to ask him, we can prevail on him to do almost anything for us. Oh, dear! I wish the person that's in there would come out quick."

Barry dragged his watch from his pocket and glanced at it.

"I've got to go," he said. "I can't wait any longer. Important business at the mill."

He rose and started toward the hall, but Miss Chichester was nearest that avenue of escape, and she intercepted him and laid a beseeching hand on his arm.

"Don't, Barry! Don't go! It won't take five minutes, once the bishop's at liberty."

Barry, in a fever of apprehension, was contemplating a sudden break for the street, when the library door opened and the bishop and his caller appeared. The visitor was the lady who, some weeks before, in a petulant mood, had declared her purpose of seeking comfort and satisfaction in another communion that recognizes the historic episcopate. But she had not gone there. She had felt, on second thought, that she could be of more service to Christianity by retaining her existing church connections and taking up arms against the rector. She was saying, as she emerged into the reception room:

"The man is impossible, Bishop; perfectly impossible! He has driven most of us from the Church already, and the rest will follow very soon unless you suppress him without delay. Oh, here's Jane Chichester. Miss Chichester will agree with me, I'm sure."

"Perfectly!" said Miss Chichester, retaining her hold on Barry's arm notwithstanding the advent of the bishop and his caller.

"And what is Mr. Malleson's opinion?" asked the bishop, advancing and shaking hands courteously with Miss Chichester and warmly with Barry, and thereby loosing the young lady's grip on the coat-sleeve of a greatly perturbed young man.

"Oh, it doesn't matter much what Barry thinks," interposed the pompous lady, rustling her gorgeous

green silk gown; "he's more than half-converted to socialism, anyway."

The bishop laughed.

"How's that, Barry?" he inquired. "Has some one been leading you into by and forbidden paths?"

"No," replied Barry, hesitatingly. "I mean, yes. Say, Bishop, I want to see you for a minute—alone—entirely alone; strictly confidential business."

"Certainly!" replied the bishop, affably. "I'm sure the ladies will excuse us. They can discuss, in our absence, fashion, society, religion, suffrage, or the Church, as they choose."

He bowed politely and smilingly to each woman in turn, drew Barry into the library, and closed the library door.

With a sigh of relief the rescued young man dropped into the nearest chair.

"She pretty near got me that time!" he exclaimed, pulling his handkerchief nervously from his pocket and wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

"Who nearly got you?" inquired the bishop.

"Why, Miss —— Say, Bishop, could you marry a couple that might drop in on you casually, suddenly, say just as though it were this afternoon?"

"I could," was the reply, "provided I was not trenching on the preserves of the parish priest, and provided the couple brought along their marriage license."

"Their what?"

"Their marriage license."

"A fellow can't get married unless he has a marriage license?"

"Not in this state."

"And has he got to get the license himself?"

"He must apply for it in person. But let me ask: what is the meaning of all these questions?"

Barry did not reply. He heaved another great sigh of relief, and settled back in his chair. He had discov-

ered a new barrier against sudden matrimony. When he did speak again he chose to change the subject.

"You see," he said, "I came to talk with you about Farrar. Now, he's the right man in the right place. He's doing a lot of good around here. I'd hate to see him kicked out."

"So would I."

"Then let's keep him here. I'll stand by him to the finish."

"But many of his parishioners demand that he shall be relieved."

"That's because they don't appreciate him. They don't sense what he's doing. They're not up to date. We run the Church according to modern methods these times, same as we do the mill."

"And those who are most insistent are communicants, vestrymen, prominent supporters."

"Well, I know I'm not a communicant nor a vestryman, but I say, Bishop, there are few men in the parish who are willing to do more for Farrar and his church than I am. I don't know, by Jove! but I'd be willing to join the Church myself if it would help Farrar out."

"That sounds good. I shall hope to see your name on the list of candidates presented to me for confirmation next year."

"But the question is: what are we going to do for Farrar?"

"I'm going to do all I can for him. I like him."

"So do I. So does Ruth Tracy, and Mrs. Bradley, and Hazzard, and Emberly, and a lot of us. Take my advice, Bishop, and keep him here. You won't be sorry; I'll give you my word for it."

Barry rose from his chair and added: "I won't keep you any longer. There's a lot of people out there to see you by this time. I've watched 'em through the window, getting out of their cars at the door. Now, you do as I tell you, Bishop, and everything will come out all right."

He grasped the prelate's hand warmly, turned toward the door, and then suddenly turned back.

"Say, Bishop," he said, "would you mind calling Jane Chichester in here just as soon as I open the door? She's been waiting a long time to see you."

"I'll be glad to."

"Thank you!" There was a tone of deep gratefulness in Barry's voice.

The bishop was as good as his word. Out of a half dozen callers waiting to see him he selected Miss Chichester for his next interview, and Barry made a successful escape.

Westgate was the first member of the vestry to arrive at the Tracy house on the evening of the consultation with the bishop. He had not been there before since the night on which Ruth had decreed their separation. He looked around on the familiar walls of the library, burdened with books and rich with pictures, and his memory went back to those other evenings when the stately room was lighted by the presence of one who still held his heart in thrall. It was not merely an emotional sadness from which he suffered as he stood there; he was aware also of an actual, stifling pain in his breast, the reaction of spiritual distress on the physical organs of life. A great longing rose within him that he might hear the soft sweep of her garments on the staircase, just as he used to hear it in the old days, that he might see her figure outlined in the doorway, and catch the welcoming smile on her face—— There was a movement in the hall, the rustling of a gown, and then, not Ruth, but her mother fluttered in. She was trembling with excitement. She felt that the climax of an eventful day was about to be reached. Her overstrained nerves were yielding to the pressure that had been put on them.

"Oh, Philip!" she exclaimed. "I'm so glad you came first. I wanted to see you. I wanted to ask you not to let him send Mr. Farrar away."

Westgate placed a chair for her and endeavored to quiet her.

"I don't think the bishop will make a decision of any kind to-night," he assured her. "He may not care at any time to exercise his power to decree a direct dismissal. But why have you changed your mind in the matter?"

"I haven't changed my mind about his sermons and his ridiculous ideas and all that, but I hate to see him disgraced, and I'm so sorry for poor, dear Mrs. Farrar. I went to call on her to-day. You should have seen her, Philip. She's a mere wreck. It was distressing the way she wept."

"I know. I'm as sorry as you are for Mrs. Farrar."

"It's pitiful! I tried to get her to come with me to see the bishop, but she wouldn't. She says she wants to go; she says it's torture to her to stay in this city; but she doesn't want her husband disgraced. Poor woman! She hardly knows what she wants. She's beside herself."

"I'm very sorry for Mrs. Farrar," repeated Westgate. "It's one of the sad results of a man's misdeeds that the innocent members of his family are often the greater sufferers."

"So I want you," went on Mrs. Tracy, "to plead with the bishop. He'll listen to you. I talked with him but he wouldn't give me any satisfaction. He said he couldn't promise anything. I tried to get Ruth to talk with him; he's very fond of Ruth; but she wouldn't. I couldn't reason with her. She says there's a great principle involved. She says that if he's wrong he's tremendously wrong, and he ought to go; and if he's right, as she believes he is, he is everlastingly right, and he ought to be vindicated, and honored and loved."

"Did she say he ought to be loved?"

"Something like that. I don't exactly remember. The whole thing is so perfectly dreadful!"

"Mrs. Tracy, I believe that Ruth's salvation depends

on Mr. Farrar's removal. The man has hypnotized her. She is under a spell."

The distracted woman searched Westgate's face, trying to grasp the full meaning of his words.

"Philip!" she gasped, "you—you don't really mean——"

"Oh, I don't mean that he has wilfully and maliciously placed her under his control. He is not a scoundrel. But she is, nevertheless, absolutely pliant to his will."

"And you think that, for Ruth's sake, he ought to go?"

"I say that unhesitatingly."

"Oh, dear! What shall we do?"

"You must quiet yourself, Mrs. Tracy, and await developments. As I have already told you, I doubt whether there will be any dismissal to-night. However, the final result will undoubtedly depend on the attitude assumed by the bishop. And so far as I am able to exercise any influence on his judgment, I shall exercise it in favor of the earliest possible dismissal of the rector of Christ Church."

"Philip, this is terrible!"

She would have said more, but at that moment other members of the vestry arrived, and she precipitately fled.

When the bishop of the diocese entered the library most of the vestrymen were already there. The rector, together with the two remaining members, came a few moments later. There were cordial exchanges of personal greetings, and some general conversation of a cheerful nature, for the bishop was what is called a good mixer. And this was his favorite parish. He had always enjoyed his visits and visitations here, and his friendships with the prominent men and women of Christ Church. The strained relations between many of these men and women and their rector had therefore given him deep concern. How to heal the breach was

a problem that taxed his episcopal judgment and ingenuity to the utmost. He deplored the loss of spirituality that must necessarily result from the quarrel. But it was his especial duty, as a bishop, to preserve the corporate integrity of organized religion, and to this end he felt that he must now bend all his efforts. Yet he approached his task with deep misgiving.

Seated, finally, at the head of the library table, he expressed his sorrow at the conflict which had arisen, and his desire to restore peace and harmony in the parish. It was his earnest wish, he said, that the case might be settled by the exercise of his godly judgment in accordance with the admonition of the canon, without the necessity of proceeding to a formal trial and decree. To that end he had called the vestry to meet with him in consultation; and, in order that there might be a full understanding of the case, he now invited those who had formulated the charges against the rector to give him the specific causes of their complaint.

Thereupon Westgate, who had been chosen to represent the complainants, arose to present their case.

He sketched briefly the history of the parish, and referred to its record for harmony and good works up to the time of the present incumbency. He then dwelt specifically on the deviations of the rector from the accustomed activities of a parish priest. He spoke of his attempt to force upon his parishioners the practice of an unwelcome, if not offensive, social equality, of his affiliation with elements in the community that were indifferent or inimical to religion, of his advocacy of an economic creed entirely at variance with the doctrines and discipline of the Church, of his utter disregard of the wishes and feelings of the bulk of his parishioners, and of his obstinate refusal to be influenced or guided in parish activities by his vestry, or by the wise judgment of those who were responsible for the maintenance and prosperity of Christ Church.

The bishop heard him through, listening attentively, but made no comment. He then called upon the accused priest to reply.

In the rector's response there was no bitterness, nor any show of resentment. He stated his position and his beliefs, his scheme of work in the parish, his hopes and aspirations for his people, and his hearty desire to unite all those affiliated in any way with Christ Church, without distinction of class, into one aggressive body pledged to the spiritual and material regeneration of men.

"I ask nothing for myself," he said in conclusion. "If my Reverend Father in God shall see fit to separate me from the people whom I love, I shall accept the decree without a murmur. In that event my only grief and fear would be that these sheep that I have shepherded will become scattered and lost. It is for their sakes, and for their sakes alone, that I desire to stay."

"Is it not possible," asked the bishop, "that you have placed too great emphasis on the wants and demands of the poor, and have given undue attention to those who take but a passing interest in the Church?"

"I think not," was the reply. "In my judgment it is the indifferent who should be sought out and urged; and in my belief it is the poor who need the greater attention as compared with the rich. They are children of the desolate. They are many more than are the children of her who is favored and blessed."

"But have you given sufficient thought to those who, for many years, have devoted themselves with single-hearted solicitude to the interests of Christ Church, and who have a right to feel that your duty toward them is at least equal to your duty toward those who have hitherto been strangers to religion?"

Westgate smiled. He felt that the bishop was reaching the vital point in the issue.

"I feel," replied the rector, "that I have done my full duty to all my people."

"And you have carefully considered the protests and appeals of those of your parishioners who have not agreed with you?"

"Carefully and prayerfully. I cannot concede what they ask. I cannot yield to their demands without stultifying myself in the eyes of men, and proving false to the trust which God has imposed on me."

It was plain that his unyielding purpose left no room for compromise. The thing must be fought out. The bishop took up and glanced at the written complaint that had been filed with him.

"You are charged here," he said, "with having violated the canons of the Church and the rubrics of the prayer-book. What have you to say to that charge?"

"I have not knowingly violated any law of the Church," was the reply. "I believe in, and I have not failed to preach, every vital doctrine set forth in our articles of religion."

The bishop turned to Westgate.

"You have charged this priest," he said, "with having taught doctrines contrary to those held by the Church. Will you kindly amplify the charge?"

"Certainly!" was the quick response. "He has declared himself to be a socialist, and he has upheld, publicly and privately, the main principles promulgated by the socialistic body. These principles are contrary to the doctrines of the Church."

"I am," explained the rector, "a Christian socialist."

"And what," retorted Westgate, "is a Christian socialist? There is no such thing, nor can there be in the very nature of the case. The two terms, Christianity and socialism, are fundamentally antagonistic to one another, and must always remain so. You might as well speak of peaceful war."

The bishop shook his head doubtfully.

"Are you conversant, Mr. Westgate," he asked,

"with the movement inaugurated by Kingsley and Maurice of the Church of England and denominated Christian socialism? I do not understand that Mr. Farrar has gone so far in his beliefs and declarations as did these churchmen and their followers, and no ecclesiastical condemnation was visited on them."

"I am well aware," replied Westgate, "of the movement in England of which you speak. I am also well aware that, so far as their religious aspect was concerned, the schemes of Maurice and Kingsley failed utterly, as did the purely economic scheme of Robert Owen who preceded them. Indeed, the only socialistic scheme that has ever survived the test of years is the one put forth by the atheistic school of Germany, the one that is growing like a Upas tree to-day. The whole idea of so-called Christian socialism has been condemned by churchmen abroad in language far more severe than any that I have used. Clergymen over there who have resorted to Fabian tracts as a means for exploiting unchristian doctrines are not those who are doing the Lord's work most effectually in the United Kingdom to-day."

The bishop's eyes snapped. Not with anger, but with interest and eagerness. He dearly loved a controversy such as this, and here, evidently, was a foeman worthy of his steel. He started vigorously to make answer to Westgate and then suddenly checked himself. He realized that this was neither the time nor place to enter into an argument on the subject of social philosophy. He contented himself with asking quietly:

"Are you familiar, Mr. Westgate, with the Encyclical issued by the Lambeth Conference, and with the report made by the Joint Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor to our last General Convention, and, if so, do you agree with the opinion therein expressed that the Church cannot stand officially for or against socialism?"

"I am entirely familiar," was the reply, "with the

matters to which you refer; and I agree that it is not the province of the Church to make war on socialism or any other economic doctrine. Her concern, as the same report declares, is with the spirit, and not with any outward form of society. Nor, by the same token, can the Church afford to have one of her priests appear as the protagonist of an economic policy which, carried to its logical conclusion, would destroy the life of the Church."

Again the bishop started to controvert Westgate's statement, again checked himself, and asked, as quietly as before:

"Are you aware that our beloved Phillips Brooks approached very close to the position which you are condemning this priest for occupying?"

"I am aware that Bishop Brooks was a Christian democrat, but a Christian socialist, never!"

The bishop smiled. He admired Westgate's pugnacity. He longed to lock horns with him in argument, but he felt that he must yield his desire to the necessities and proprieties of the occasion. With a sigh he picked up the written complaint which was lying on the table before him, and glanced at it.

"You have here charged your rector," he said, "with having administered the holy communion in a manner contrary to the rubrics. Will you please specify?"

"Certainly," was the response. "The rubric for the holy communion commands that the minister shall not receive any one to the communion who has done any wrong to his neighbor by word or deed. Mr. Farrar has repeatedly administered this sacrament to avowed socialists who preach the confiscation of their neighbors' goods, and who stand ready to practice what they preach so soon as they can so change the law that they will not suffer the usual penalty."

The bishop smiled again, but he shook his head impatiently.

"Is not that objection rather far-fetched?" he asked.

"I do not think so," was the reply. "He has, by both precept and example, placed the seal of the Church on a doctrine which is utterly subversive of social order and human rights. I do not think the Church will tolerate it."

Without making a reply the bishop glanced again at the complaint. It was evident that he was not inclined to give serious consideration to Westgate's attack on the rector's attitude toward socialism.

"What have you to say," he inquired, "concerning your charge that the minister has violated the rubric in the order for the burial of the dead?"

"This," was the prompt reply. "I charge him with having, in violation of the rubric, used the office of the Church in the burial of one, John Bradley, an unbaptized adult, a scoffer at religion, and a detractor of the Church."

The bishop did not smile this time. He looked sober and perplexed. At last the objections had advanced beyond the domain of triviality, and were directed at things of moment, things which might undermine the authority and integrity of the Church. He turned to the rector and inquired:

"What have you to say to this, Mr. Farrar?"

"I did," replied the minister, "commit the body of John Bradley to the grave. Whether in his lifetime he was baptized or unbaptized, whether he had been a believer or a scoffer, I did not stop to inquire."

"Was it not your duty to have done so?"

"Under the circumstances, I think not. I was at the burial merely as an onlooker when I was suddenly confronted with a request to officiate."

"What form of service did you use?"

"I do not know. I may not have used any. I have no recollection. With the body of a man before me who had suffered at the hands of the ruling class, and who had died in the shadow of a deep injustice, I simply said the things that came into my mind to say."

"It is important that we should know what those things were. The Church cannot tolerate freedom of speech under her auspices at the burial of the unbaptized dead, nor the unwarranted use of her service at the grave of one who has died scoffing at religion."

"I wish it were in my power to reproduce my words. I should not be ashamed of them, and I am sure they would not condemn me."

The bishop, worried and uncertain, looked anxiously around the room. But, before he could make up his mind what to say or do next, Emberly rose in his place. It was evident that the man was laboring under great excitement, but he spoke, nevertheless, with commendable restraint.

"If the bishop desires," he said, "to know what words were used, I believe we can supply him with that information. The widow of John Bradley is here in the house. I have heard her say on more than one occasion that the words of our rector's brief address at the burial of her husband are indelibly stamped on her memory."

"Can the woman be brought before us?" asked the bishop.

"Without doubt," replied Emberly. "I saw her come in, and I will try to find her." He left the room in search of the desired witness.

It was true that Mary Bradley was in the house. She knew that the bishop was to hear the charges against the rector this night; everybody knew it; charges which, if sustained, would surely result in his humiliation and disgrace. She felt that the one man above all others to whom she owed any gleam of light that had ever fallen across the darkness of her life was in imminent peril. She was torn with anxiety concerning him. The four walls of her home on Factory Hill could not contain her. She found a neighbor's boy for an escort, and started out. Impelled by a

force with which she did not and could not parley, she made her way across the city to Fountain Park, and into the arms of Ruth Tracy, stretched out to receive her. The Mary and Martha of Holy Writ were not more concerned for the welfare of the persecuted Christ than were these two women for the safety of the man to whom each, in a way and to an extent unknown to the other, was supremely devoted. In the woman from Factory Hill it was the desire to be near him in his hour of trial that was paramount. She might, by some bare possibility, be able to serve him, to defend him, to refute his enemies. At least she would know, without a night of dreadful suspense, what fate had befallen him. Then Emberly came to summon her, and when she knew what was wanted she went with him gladly.

In the library there was a halt in the proceedings, and an awkward lull. The full and florid face of the bishop was flushed more deeply than usual. With the fingers of one hand he tapped nervously the engraved seal of the big episcopal ring that ornamented the other hand, and awaited in silence the advent of the witness. The expectant and apprehensive countenances of the men who faced him marked their own agitation of mind. The rector alone of all of them sat confident and unperturbed. The wide doors into the hall, having been opened, were not again closed. Then Emberly entered with Mary Bradley. All eyes were turned on the woman. She was not abashed, nor did she appear in any way to be ill at ease. Yet there had never in her life before been a moment when her nerves were more nearly at the breaking point.

"My good woman," said the bishop, "we are informed that the rector of Christ Church officiated at the burial of your deceased husband. Is this true?"

"It is true," she replied, "that he made a brief address at my husband's grave."

"At whose request?"

"At mine."

"Did he use a prayer-book, or any particular form of religious service?"

"He did not."

"Can you remember what he said?"

"As well as though it had been said yesterday."

"Will you kindly repeat his words, as you remember them?"

"I will. He said: 'In that day when the grave shall give up its dead, and the souls of them that were in prison shall be free, may we know that the unchained spirit of this our brother has reached the fulfilment of the joys that were denied him here, but which, through all time, have awaited his coming into that glorious country where toil and patience and a good conscience shall have their reasonable reward.' And then he said: 'Amen.'"

She bowed her head as though in reverent memory of the event. The room was so still that men heard their own hearts beat.

The bishop sighed.

"Was that all?" he asked.

"That was all."

"We thank you. You may retire."

She turned to go, but, before she had taken a step, Westgate rose to his feet.

"May I interrogate the witness?" he asked.

"If it is the pleasure of the witness to answer your interrogations," the bishop replied.

"I will answer anything," said Mary Bradley.

"Had your husband ever been baptized?" inquired Westgate.

"I do not know," she replied. "I greatly doubt it."

"Did he ever attend the services of any church?"

"Never, to my knowledge."

"Was he not an avowed unbeliever in religion?"

"He knew nothing about religion. I think he cared less," was the frank reply.

"Did he not openly scoff at piety, and ridicule the Church?"

"I do not think he was sufficiently concerned about either of them to scoff at or ridicule them."

She met his questions with such frankness and bluntness that Westgate, nettled more at the manner than at the matter of her replies, resolved to hit closer at the mark.

"You asked the rector to do what he did at the burial?"

"I did."

"Are you, yourself, a member of any church?"

"I am not."

"Nevertheless, you attend the services at Christ Church?"

"I go every Sunday."

"Do you believe in God?"

"Not in the God you patronize and profit by."

"Do you believe in Jesus Christ?"

"As you picture Him, no. As the Bible pictures Him, yes. He was the friend of the poor and the oppressed."

"You are a socialist?"

"I am."

"And the secretary of the Socialist League?"

"I am."

"Do you know one Stephen Lamar?"

"I know him."

"He is prominent in your league?"

"He is an important member of it."

"He is a radical socialist?"

"I have heard him say that he is."

"And an atheist?"

"I have heard him say that he is."

"You are frequently in his company?"

"As often as my business with him requires it."

"Is it not a fact that this Stephen Lamar is your accepted lover?"

She shot at him a look blazing with indignation.

"You have no right," she said, "to ask me that question, and I shall not answer it."

Westgate paid no heed to her refusal. With forefinger pointed at her to emphasize his demand, he went on:

"Two weeks ago you made an afternoon call at this house?"

"I had that pleasure."

"And when you went home darkness had fallen?"

"I believe so. Why do you ask?"

"We shall see. And on your way across the city you were accompanied by a man?"

"Sir, you have no right ——"

"And this man walked with you across the Malleson foot-bridge?"

Pallid, with startled eyes, with clenched hands, she cried out again:

"I say you have no right ——"

"And in the middle of the bridge, this man, with his arm around your waist ——"

"Stop!"

It was not Mary Bradley this time. It was the rector of Christ Church who spoke. He was on his feet. His eyes were flashing and his voice was resonant with anger. "Stop! You shall not bully and insult this woman. I'll not permit it."

"I desire," retorted Westgate, "to reveal the personal character and conduct of the star witness whom you have brought here to-night to bolster up your lost cause."

"I have brought no witness here, and you know it. And you shall not seize on an innocent circumstance to drag the name of an honest woman in the mire. I say I'll not permit it."

"And I say that the woman is her own detractor, and I shall show her to this company in her true light ——"

But he got no further. He was suddenly aware that in the doorway leading from the hall Ruth Tracy was standing, and the mysterious power of her presence struck silence into his defaming tongue. At her side was her mother, and behind them was the master of the house. The loud voices, the heated retorts, heard by them through the open doors as they sat in their room across the hall, had drawn them resistlessly to the scene of the conflict. At the moment of Westgate's startled pause, Ruth, after flinging one scornful glance at her former lover, swept across the hall and put her arm protectingly around Mary Bradley's waist. The vestrymen all started to their feet, and some of them began to talk excitedly, and to make loud demands. The situation had become acute, extreme, impossible.

The bishop rose and threw both his hands into the air above his head.

"I will hear no more!" he cried, his voice rising high above the increasing clamor in the room. "I will hear no more!" he repeated, "and may God give you better hearts before we meet again."

Ruth drew Mary Bradley from the room, pushing by her mother who stood in the doorway sobbing and clinging to her astounded husband. The vestrymen "went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last."

Only the minister remained. The bishop turned to him, smiled grimly, and said:

"'Where are those thine accusers?'"

And the minister replied: "They have cast their handful of stones at me and have gone."

"Farrar, I want you to come with me to my room."

Two hours later the rector of Christ Church left the Tracy mansion, and started down the hill toward home in the face of a blinding snow-storm. And ever and anon, as he strode along, he broke away from the memory of the heart-searching counsel given to him by

his Reverend Father in God to wonder where Westgate had learned of the episode at the bridge, and what unwarranted and unsavory interpretation he was endeavoring to place on it, and what malign purpose he had in mind.

CHAPTER XV

LOVE VERSUS LAW

On the day following the conference with the bishop the rector of Christ Church called at Philip Westgate's office. He did not seek a quarrel, but he did seek an explanation. He was not one to sit quietly or fearfully under insinuations which might or might not reflect on his personal character or his ministerial office. All his life he had lived in the open, clear of conscience, afraid of no man. He would live so still. Therefore he sought Westgate. The lawyer was in and was not engaged. He still had a bitter taste in his mouth from the night before. He was not wholly satisfied with what he had done at the conference with the bishop. Under the clear light of day, in the absence of any irritating impulses, his ardor cooled by the intervening night, he had come to the conclusion that, in his interrogation of Mary Bradley, he had overreached himself. He confided to his senior partner, Mr. Tracy, his opinion that he had made a damned fool of himself. And his senior partner fully agreed with him. It was, therefore, in a spirit of partial humility that he received the rector of Christ Church. But he made no explanations or apologies. He felt that whatever of this nature he might owe to others, he owed nothing to this man. He simply waited to be informed of the purpose of the call. He had not long to wait, for his visitor had a habit of going directly to the point.

"I want to talk with you, Mr. Westgate," he said, "about the incident of last evening. I would like to know your purpose in asking those last questions of Mrs. Bradley."

"I do not object to telling you," replied Westgate. "It should have been plain to you at the time. My purpose was to make it clear to the bishop that the woman whom you or your friends produced in your behalf was utterly unworthy to testify in any matter relating to the welfare of the Church."

"Why unworthy?"

"Because she is a menace to society, a disbeliever in God, a scoffer at religion, a woman who violates all rules of womanly propriety at her pleasure."

"Why do you make that last assertion?"

"As she appears to be your assistant and associate in your economic enterprises, I presumed that you were familiar with her character and reputation. However, I may say that a woman who within three months of her husband's death spreads her alluring net to entrap the weak-minded son of a millionaire, and at the same time openly consorts with another man, a demagogue, an atheist, a villifier of both Church and state, surely such a woman cannot be described as a model of propriety."

The minister, by the exercise of great self-restraint, maintained his coolness and intrepidity.

"The two men to whom you refer," he said, "are Barry Malleson and Stephen Lamar. Will you kindly give me a single instance of unwomanly conduct on the part of Mrs. Bradley with either of them?"

"Certainly! Had it not been for your interruption last night you would have heard it all then and there. It is a fact, as I intended to make her admit, that in the early evening, on the Malleson foot-bridge, she indulged in most unseemly demonstrations of affection with this man Lamar."

"Was that the occasion to which you referred last evening?"

"It was."

"And it is your information that Lamar is the man who was with her on the bridge?"

"Certainly! I can prove it."

"You are mistaken. I know who the man was, and it was not Stephen Lamar."

"Who was it, then?"

"It was I, Robert Farrar."

"You!"

"It was I. I helped Mrs. Bradley across the bridge."

"Impossible! This man had his arm around the woman's waist."

"I had my arm about Mrs. Bradley's waist. In that manner I assisted her across the bridge. Nor were there any demonstrations of affection of any kind."

The lawyer stared at his visitor in amazement. He could not conceive why this man should so frankly assume responsibility for an act of impropriety properly charged to another.

"I don't believe you," he said, bluntly. "You are trying, for some inscrutable reason, to shield the woman."

"The woman needs no protection save against such slanderous tongues as yours."

Westgate did not resent the remark. Indeed, he did not fully appreciate it. He was too busily engaged in wondering at the minister's attitude. For a moment he did not even reply. Then he asked:

"Am I distinctly to understand that it was you and not Lamar who was with Mrs. Bradley on the bridge?"

"I cannot make the statement of that fact too positive, nor can I state too positively that on that occasion Mrs. Bradley conducted herself as became a modest, refined, pure-minded woman. Westgate, some one has been telling you one of those half-truths which are 'ever the worst of lies,' and you have been only too eager to envelop it with an evil motive."

Still Westgate showed no resentment. He was apparently immersed in thought.

"Do you realize," he inquired at last, "what sort of

a weapon you are putting into my hands to-day—a weapon with which I can, at any moment, blacken your character, and blast your career?"

"I realize nothing," replied the rector, "except that a woman's good name has been attacked, and that it is my duty to defend her. If you choose to divert the knowledge I have given you to the base uses of slander, that will be your sin, not mine."

At last Westgate began to wake up. His face paled and he rose to his feet.

"Mr. Farrar," he said, "I think this interview had better come to an end."

"I quite agree with you," was the response. "My errand is done. I have the explanation I came for. I believe that is all."

"So far as I am concerned, it is."

There were no more words on either side. The rector bowed politely, and then left the office, as clear-eyed, as high-minded and unafraid as when he entered it.

But on Westgate's soul there lay a burden of knowledge which was to tempt him sorely in the days to come.

The story of the sensational episode at the conference with the bishop did not reach Barry Malleson's ears until the second day after its occurrence. It came, as one might have expected it would, burdened with exaggerations. Barry was greatly disturbed. He walked aimlessly for a while about his quarters at the mill, then he put on his overcoat, hat and gloves, and announced that he was going up to see Phil Westgate. But when he got as far as Main Street he changed his mind, and started down-town instead. It had occurred to him that before attacking Westgate it might be wise to get the facts in the case directly from Mrs. Bradley. He would be more sure of his ground. When he reached Mrs. Bradley's office in the Potter Building he found her engaged. He excused himself, backed out, paced

up and down the hall for a few minutes, and then went down to the street. He did not go back up-town, but he walked down through the wholesale district, picked his way among boxes and barrels, and examined crates of fruit and vegetables and poultry. When, after a half hour, he returned to the office of the League, he found Mrs. Bradley alone. She had expected that he would return, and was waiting for him. It was not an unusual thing for him to visit her there; scarcely a day had passed of late that he had not come in on one errand or another. He was imbibing socialism slowly, as his mental system was able to absorb the doctrine. So far as he understood it he was willing to subscribe to its principles. There was a basic element of justice underlying it all that quite appealed to him. It is true that the socialists of the city did not greatly pride themselves on their secretary's new convert, but this accession to their ranks gave deep satisfaction to Mrs. Bradley. Not that Barry's assistance or influence amounted to much, but that she knew the thing to be a thorn in the flesh of Richard Malleson. Lying in the background of her mind, living and throbbing, as it did on that disastrous day in court, was still her revengeful purpose to annoy, to humiliate, to bring to defeat and disaster, if possible, the man who was responsible for her having been sent empty-handed from the hall of justice. Lamar understood her motive and sympathized with her. He even suffered her, without marked protest, to receive Barry's open attentions. He knew that, in receiving them, the one thought in her mind was to harass the young man's aristocratic father with the prospect of having for a daughter-in-law that queen of the proletarians, Mary Bradley. There was many a quip passed back and forth between them concerning Barry's infatuation, and many an exchange of meaning glances, as together they instructed him in the elementary principles of socialism. And Barry, floundering beyond his depth in both

philosophy and love, frowned on by his father, upbraided by his mother and sisters, ridiculed by his friends, sought solace ever more and more frequently in the company of the woman who had cast her spell upon him. He did not notice the care-worn look on her face, and the weariness in her eyes, as he reëntered her office that afternoon; the radiance of her smile made all else dim. And there was no abatement from the usual warmth of her welcome.

"I've just heard," said Barry, "about that affair up at Tracy's night before last. I was going up to have it out with Phil, but I decided to come in and talk it over with you first."

"I'm so glad you did," she said. "I don't want you to have it out with him. I don't want you to talk with him about it, or even mention it to him."

"But the thing's all over town to-day."

"Who—whom do they say it was who is alleged to have been with me on the bridge?"

"Why, Phil and that crowd allow it was Steve, but some say it was me. Now, you know I wasn't there."

The look of anxiety dropped from her face and she laughed merrily.

"Certainly!" she replied. "I know it was not you. And I've told you it wasn't Steve."

"But it must have been somebody."

"Do you doubt me, Barry?"

She had been calling him by his given name of late, and had given him permission to call her by hers.

"N-no. Only the thing's mighty funny. Jane Chichester swore she couldn't be mistaken."

Mary Bradley laughed again.

"Ah!" she said; "then it was Miss Chichester who witnessed that surprising exhibition of womanly immodesty. Don't you think she was giving rein to her imagination?"

"She might have been," admitted Barry. "She

does imagine things sometimes. Do you know, I think she imagines, sometimes, that I'm really going to marry her."

"But you're not, are you, Barry?"

"Mrs. Bradley!—I mean Mary—how can you ask such a question when you know my only ambition is to marry you."

"That's very nice of you, Barry. But what would your father say to it?"

"Oh, he's dead set against it, of course."

"Why is he dead set against it?"

"He thinks you're not in our class."

"It would jolt his pride?"

"It would smash it. But you know, Mary, that would make no difference to me."

"It might cost you your job."

"No fear of that. They can't get along without me at the mill. Much of the success of the company is due to the way I manage things there."

"Indeed!" She smiled, and yet she felt that it was pathetic in a way—this man's confidence in his own ability, his open-mindedness and sincerity. One thing only she rolled as a sweet morsel under her tongue: Richard Malleson's distress at his son's infatuation.

But Barry's mind still dwelt on the bridge incident. "If I thought," he said, "that there was the slightest thing in that story of Jane's about you and Steve——"

She reached her hand across the table and laid it on his as she had a habit of doing of late, and looked serenely into his eyes.

"Barry," she said, "you dear old f—fellow! If I thought there was the slightest danger of your getting jealous over that story, I'd make Jane Chichester eat her words. As it is, 'the least said the soonest mended.' Oh, here's Steve now."

Lifting her eyes at the sound of footsteps in the hall she had discovered Lamar in the doorway, and had hastily withdrawn her hand.

"Come in, Steve," she called out to him. "Barry's here. We were just talking about you."

"And I've just been talking about you," replied Steve as he entered the room, giving scant notice to Barry, and seated himself at the end of the table.

"What about me?" she inquired.

"I've just heard," he replied, "about the affair up at Tracy's the other night, and about the way that bully-ragging lawyer heckled you. I was going right up there to take it out of his hide, but I thought I'd better come in first and get the thing straight."

"That's right, Steve. That's what Barry did. Didn't you, Barry?"

"Yes," responded Barry. "I was going up there myself to have a reckoning with Phil; but Mary says, 'Don't go.'"

"I say the same thing to you, Steve," said the woman. "Don't go. I want the matter dropped. I don't want either of you to discuss it with another soul. If you do, the one that does it need never speak to me again."

She sat resolutely back in her chair, facing each man in turn, looking at them with eyes of authority.

"But," protested Lamar, "so far as I can understand, the whole town's talking about it."

"Indeed!" she replied; "and which of you two gentlemen do they say was with me on the bridge?"

"Why, they're not quite sure."

"Then we'll settle it here among ourselves. Was it you, Steve?"

"I'll swear it wasn't," emphatically.

"Good! Was it you, Barry?"

"No, Mrs. Bradley, on my soul it wasn't."

"There you are, gentlemen. Honors are even." She laughed and added: "Now you can shake hands and make up. The bridge incident is closed."

But Lamar sat staring at Barry incredulously. He had made up his mind that, since he had not been the

man in the bridge case, it must necessarily have been Barry. And he had come to Mary Bradley, not alone for information with which to confront Westgate, but also to file a vigorous protest with her against her conduct with his inconsequential rival. Barry's denial had taken the ground from under his feet. He could scarcely believe that the man was telling the truth, yet no one had ever known Barry to variate a hair's breadth from the exact truth as he understood it.

"Moreover," added Mary Bradley, "it's past closing time, and I want to start home this minute, and I will thank you gentlemen to permit me to close the office."

Both men rose to their feet, expressed their regret at having delayed her, said good-night to her, and went out together. Side by side they walked up the street, chatting as they went, brother socialists, friendly rivals for the favor of a fascinating woman. Lamar stopped at the Silver Star, but Barry would not go in. He had not yet reached that stage of the common fellowship game, where the drinking saloon has its attractions. Lamar went in alone, sat down at a table in the room to the rear of the bar, and over his glass of whiskey and soda he pondered the thing he had that day heard concerning Mary Bradley. Who was it who had crossed the bridge with her? Or was the story simply a vicious slander made up out of whole cloth? So faint and far away that at first he could barely grasp it, a suspicion arose. It took on form. It was shadowy and tenuous indeed. It faded out only to reappear. And, ever after, it followed him about, a ghost that he could not lay, and dared not challenge.

It was a week after the conference that a letter came from the bishop of the diocese to the vestry of Christ Church. In it he deplored the quarrel that had arisen between certain of the vestrymen and the rector. He was grieved over the bitterness of spirit that had been

displayed. He regretted that his godly judgment, exercised individually, both with the rector and his people, had not availed to settle the unhappy differences that were distracting the parish. He was pained beyond measure at the untoward result of the evening conference at the Tracy house. But since it seemed to be impossible for the parties to the controversy either themselves to adjust their differences or to accept such impartial advice as he had privately given them, he should not assume, alone and unaided, to decide the question of the forcible dissolution of the pastoral relation. He should ask the advice of the Standing Committee, as was his right under the canon. He should also consult with the chancellor of the diocese. And, proceeding with their aid and counsel, he would, in due time, render judgment on the matters in controversy.

"In the meantime, brethren," read his closing admonition, "let the spirit which was in Christ be in you all. Let not His religion be brought into disrepute by this unseemly quarrel; and let the integrity and dignity of the Church be maintained at all hazards."

But the good bishop said, confidentially, to a brother prelate: "Oh, that I could be a second Pilate, and take water and wash my hands before this accusing multitude, and say, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it.'"

It was true that the bishop had intended to ask the advice of the Standing Committee, and to consult the chancellor of the diocese. Not that he expected to receive much disinterested aid from either source. For the chancellor was a well-known corporation lawyer whose skill and experience had for years been at the service of capital and of the ruling class. What his judgment would be in this matter could be readily foreseen. Nor was the prospect of receiving helpful advice from the Standing Committee much more encouraging. The presbyters of this committee were mostly rectors of churches controlled by rich and aristocratic mem-

bers, or churches under the patronage and domination of certain families of wealth; while the lay members were all of the conservative, substantial, anti-socialistic type. It required no prophetic power to discover with which party to the controversy they would be in sympathy.

After considering the matter, the bishop felt that, after all, it might be better for him to decide the case unaided. But how to decide it; that was the question. If he should comply with the demand of the vestry, and dissolve the pastoral relation, he would not only be putting upon the Church the stigma of catering to the rich, and disregarding and driving out the poor, but he would also be humiliating and disgracing a man who, however mistaken he might be in his methods, had violated no ecclesiastical law, and who was conscientiously and earnestly striving to bring the religion of Jesus Christ home to the common people. On the other hand, were he to sustain the rector, it would mean giving serious offense to those important and wealthy parishioners who in the past had made Christ Church the strongest and most influential body in the diocese. And what then would happen? Undoubtedly the church would be left to its fate; and its fate could easily be foretold. For the bishop did not delude himself with the belief or hope that the class of people who had recently become attracted and attached to the rector, together with his old friends who still stood by him, would either be able or willing to support and maintain the customary activities of the church. Indeed, his wide experience and his worldly wisdom led him to a far different conclusion. So what was he to do? He decided that for the present he would do nothing. He would delay his decision in the hope—a forlorn hope, indeed—that the parties themselves would settle their controversy, or that, before the day of necessary action should come, a kind Providence would in some way relieve him of his embarrassment.

The agreement between the Malleson Manufacturing Company and its employees was to expire on the first day of January. The men demanded a new agreement, and, under the leadership of Bricky Hoover, set about to obtain it. The new agreement, they declared, must provide for a schedule of wages which would show a ten per cent. advance. There must also be better pay for overtime, the discharge of all non-union employees, and full recognition of the union in all matters pertaining to the employment of labor. The men were sustained in their demand by the local unions to which they belonged, and their action was fully and formally approved by the central body. Of course the Malleson Company protested, and declined to accede to the demands. There were counter-propositions and conferences; but neither side would yield. The first day of January came and went. By tacit agreement work was continued, awaiting a settlement. But no settlement came. Day by day the situation grew more critical. Finally, at a mass-meeting of employees, peremptory instructions were given to the strike committee, in pursuance of which an ultimatum was issued to the company to the effect that unless within three days the demands of the men were complied with the strike order would go into effect. On the afternoon of the last day Richard Malleson called together his board of directors, and, after careful and serious consideration of the situation, they decided to yield. It was really the only thing to do. Of course there was a choice between two evils; on the one hand the practical wiping out of profits through increased wages and shorter hours, on the other the disaster that would come with and follow a long and costly strike. The president of the company advised his associates to choose the first horn of the dilemma, and they did so. But they chose it despairingly and resentfully, with bitterness in their hearts. The men, of course, were jubilant. They had obtained practically everything for which they had

asked. On one point only had they yielded. The seven non-union employees were permitted to remain. But, as an offset, a clause was inserted in the new agreement to the effect that no discrimination of any kind, at any time, should be made against any one on account of his affiliation with a union, nor on account of his participation in the controversy, nor on account—and this was emphasized—of his leadership in the successful fight for better conditions. So work did not cease, wages were advanced, hours were shortened, the rights of labor had been sustained, a long step had been taken toward the goal which the workingman has always in view. Steve Lamar and Bricky Hoover were the heroes of the hour. The first because he had so skilfully planned and directed the contest, the second because, as leader and spokesman, he had come out of every conference with flying colors, and by sheer persistence had brought Richard Malleson and his capitalistic partners to their knees.

On the evening following the signing of the new wage-agreement the barroom of the Silver Star was crowded. It was still early, but there was barely standing room in the place. When Lamar and Hoover entered together a great shout went up. Every foaming glass was held high and clinked loudly, and drained to the bottom in their honor. These, indeed, were the men to free labor from its chains. Smilingly, deprecatingly as became them, they acknowledged the greeting and passed on into the inner room which had been the scene of so many of their conferences. When they were seated at a table, their glasses half-drained, the tips of their cigars glowing cheerily, Lamar looked at Bricky, smiled and said:

"Well?"

And Bricky smiled back and replied:

"Well?"

"So far so good," said Lamar. "Now for the strike."

"The what?" asked Bricky.

"The strike."

"Why, man, ain't that just what we've got away from with whole hides?"

"I wasn't hell-bent on getting away from it, Bricky. Didn't I tell you a month ago, in this very room, that there'd got to be a strike?"

"Sure! But we've got what we wanted without it."

"Not yet we haven't."

"What more do we want?"

"We want to smash Dick Malleson."

Bricky pondered for a moment.

"Ye didn't fall far short o' smashin' him," he said finally. "But how in heaven's name will ye git a strike now?"

Lamar took an equal length of time before replying.

"Bricky," he said at last, "you've got to be discharged."

"Me? Discharged? What for?"

"Oh, anything. Neglect of duty. Impertinence. Sabotage. Can't you see that you're what the diplomats call *non persona grata* at capitalistic headquarters? You've put up a successful fight. You're a union leader. You're a warrior in the ranks of labor. Bricky, you're an agitator, you're a menace; you've got to go. Confound you, man! Can't you see what I'm driving at?"

Bricky was not so dull but that he saw. Yet he did not seem to be very favorably impressed with Lamar's plan. He thought about it for a moment before answering.

"So I'm to be made the goat, am I?" he said, at last.

"You're to be made the goat. That's right. But you'll feed high. Remember what I say: you'll feed high."

Again Bricky pondered. Then he repeated Lamar's words:

"'Neglect of duty. Impertinence. Sabotage.' What the hell's sabotage, Steve?"

"Oh, creating a little incidental damage now and then. Monkeying with the machinery. Putting it out of commission. I don't mean stupidly smashing it, you know. Just getting it out of order occasionally, in a way that it'll take half a day to fix it up. You can do it all right. Keep it up. Spoil a piece of work once in a while. Be careless. Be damned careless. Of course they'll bring you up for it. They'll send you to the office. There's where you can get in a nice line of impertinence. You'll get your walking papers. The boys won't stand for it. They won't see you put upon. Not one of them. They'll strike in less than twelve hours. I know what I'm talking about."

Still Bricky pondered. It was apparent that he was not enthusiastic over the proposition. He did not refuse it, but he wanted to think it over. It must have been a full minute before he looked up and inquired:

"And where do you say I get off?"

"At the corner of Greenback Avenue and Easy Street."

Bricky filled his glass again, drained it and set it down.

"Steve," he asked, "what you got agin old man Malleson anyhow? I should naturally s'pose that if you had anything in for anybody you'd have it in for the young cub."

Lamar tossed his head impatiently.

"Oh," he replied, "he counts for nothing. He's simply a damned fool. It's the old man that I've got a grudge against."

"What's your grudge?"

"Well, for one thing, he sent John Bradley penniless to his grave. John was a friend of mine."

"So. But I don't see as you've got any great kick comin' there. John left a perty good-lookin' widder, didn't he?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Perty good friend o' yourn, ain't she?"

"I hope so. What are you driving at?"

"Oh, nothin' much. Only if John was still on this earthly sp'ere your chances would be more limited, wouldn't they?"

Lamar laughed. "Perhaps so," he said. "You've got a long head, Bricky."

"Sure, I've got a long head. I can put two an' two together as well as the next man. The widder wants to smash Dick Malleson's pocketbook. You want to smash the widder's heart. I ain't blamin' either of ye. Ye've both got plenty of aggravation. So you want my help, do you, Steve?"

"I want your help."

"An' you're willin' to pay for it?"

"I'll pay you well."

"All right! Let's git down to brass tacks. Push that button, will ye? I'm dry."

Lamar pushed the button. More liquid cheer was brought in. After that the conference was still more confidential. At the end of twenty minutes they rose, clinked their glasses, drank to each other's success, and left the place.

Stephen Lamar went straight from the Silver Star saloon to the home of Mary Bradley on Factory Hill.

"I beg to report," he said to her, "that your orders concerning Richard Malleson are in process of execution."

"What have you done to him?" she asked.

"I've compelled him to sign a new agreement to avoid a strike."

"I know you have. You've given him a chance to save himself when you might have crushed him."

"Don't be too fast. I know what I'm about. The new agreement will hurt him more than two strikes would."

"How do you make that out?"

"He can't afford to pay the scale. It's ruinous. It eats up all profits. I know. I have it straight from his own office."

"But it doesn't wreck him. I want him wrecked. He'll meet the scale by raising the price of his product."

"He can't. Competition's too keen. He's not in the trust."

"Oh, he'll meet the situation somehow. He's got a long head. You should have had the strike. You've made a mistake."

Lamar laughed. "You're too impatient," he said. "You don't see the end of the plot. There's going to be a strike."

"Who says so?"

"I do."

"Haven't the men just signed a new wage-scale?"

"Yes, but there's going to be a strike just the same."

"On what ground?"

"Bricky Hoover's going to be discharged."

"How do you know that?"

"Never mind how I know it. I know it. Bricky's going to be discharged. He's an infernal agitator. He's the idol of the men. They won't see him punished. There'll be a strike within twenty-four hours after he gets his papers. You wait and see."

For a minute she sat quietly, turning the matter over in her mind. Then she looked up at him.

"Steve," she said, "you're a wonder." His scheme had become clear to her.

"I can do a good deal," he replied, "when there's the right inducement. In this case you're the inducement."

She paid little heed to his remark. She was again thinking. At last she asked, as if to assure herself of the fact:

"You say the new wage-scale is ruinous?"

"Yes, I know it. It carries him more than half-way to financial destruction."

"And on top of that you propose to precipitate a strike?"

"Exactly. That will be the final twist of the rope."

"Good! You're doing bravely. Keep it up. You have my sympathy and congratulations."

"Thank you, Mary. But I want more than sympathy and congratulations."

"What do you want? You know I have no money."

"Money be damned! I want my reward."

"What reward?"

"You know well enough. You said that when I had Richard Malleson smashed I should have a man's reward. I want a foretaste of it to-night. I've earned it."

"And what is a man's reward?"

"It's a woman's love. There's nothing else under heaven that's worth working for or fighting for."

There was no doubt that he meant what he said. The look in his eyes, the flush on his face, the big shoulders bent toward her, all proved it. She, herself, knew that to obtain some manifestation of love from her he would be willing to fight all the powers of earth and air. But her countenance did not change by so much as the dropping of an eyelid. She looked at him unflinchingly.

"I understand you," she said. "You want me to say that I love you."

"Yes. And not only to say it, but to prove it."

Still she was calm, deliberate.

"Let me see," she asked; "you have a wife?"

"Yes, but she's nothing to me."

"Why not?"

"Because there's no love between us. Marriage without love is legal debasement. Love without marriage may reach the supreme height of human happiness."

Suddenly she appeared to grow interested. Her cheeks flushed and her eyes shone. He thought she was seeing something of his vision.

"Do you think," she asked, "that a married man has a moral right to love a woman who is not his wife?"

"Undoubtedly, when the woman who is his wife has ceased to care for him. The marriage contract is binding in conscience, and should be in law, only so long as love lasts between the parties to it. You are a socialist. You know what our doctrine is. In the coming socialist commonwealth there will be no permanent marriage bond. It will be a bond that can be dissolved at will. It will accommodate itself to the happiness of those affected by it. That's the doctrine of Marx and Bebel and Belfort Bax. Then a man will be legally as well as morally free to put off a dead love and take on a living one. It's a living love that, with your help, I shall take on to-night."

She appeared to drink in his words.

"And what about the woman?" she asked; "the woman who loves a married man? Has she a right to do that? Has she a right, if the time should be opportune, to tell him so?"

"It's the right of every woman to seek happiness where she can find it; to ask for it if she will; it's her duty to take it when it's offered to her, as I offer it to you to-night."

"And, Steve, if a man's wife is nothing to him, if she has no sympathy with him, if she's a millstone about his neck, and he can have the love of another woman who is fond of him, oh, passionately fond of him, do you think it would be wrong for either of them to give himself to—to give herself unreservedly to the other? Do you, Steve? Do you?"

She was leaning toward him, eager, excited, her eyes glowing, her lips parted, her white teeth gleaming, her breast heaving with emotion. To the man who craved her she was wildly fascinating. He had never before seen her when she so appealed to every atom of his nature. Drawn irresistibly, he moved closer to her.

"Wrong?" he exclaimed. "Nothing under heaven would be more just. What are laws in the face of a passion like ours? In the new socialistic state there will be no such laws. And whatever would be right and of good conscience then is right and of good conscience now, in spite of all the capitalistic laws that were ever invented to oppress humanity."

He moved still closer to her, and took up her hand which was hanging loosely at her side, and held it and caressed it. She made no remonstrance; she did not appear to notice what he was doing. It was plain to him that this woman who had held him in check and at bay for months was at last ready to yield to his importunities.

"That would be heavenly," she said, and she seemed to be talking to herself rather than to him, "heavenly! But we would need to hide it; we would have to keep it secret—for a time."

His face was so close to hers that she might have felt his breath upon her cheek.

"No, dear," he answered her, "we do not need to hide it. People who know us and believe in us, and for whose opinions we care, will not criticize us; all others may do so to their heart's content. It will not matter to us; we shall be supremely happy in spite of them."

He passed his arm around her shoulders and drew her face against his.

Then, suddenly, she awoke. She threw his arm from her as if it had been a serpent coiled about her body. She wrenched herself free from him, and sprang to her feet. In the excitement her chair was overturned and fell with a crash to the floor. The door leading from the kitchen was pushed open from without, and an old woman, with frightened eyes, looked in.

"What's the matter, Mary?" she asked.

"Nothing, mother. Everything's all right; come in."

Lamar picked up the chair, and stood with flushed and scowling face.

"What was all the noise about?" asked the old woman.

"Why, Steve was just going, and he accidentally tipped over his chair getting up, that's all. You needn't go back into the kitchen, mother. Steve isn't going to stay any longer."

The man's scowl deepened. "But there's more I want to say to you," he said, "and I want to say it to you alone."

"Not to-night, Steve. Some other time, perhaps. I want to think over what you've already told me. You've given me some wonderful ideas, some heavenly hopes. I want to think them over."

"And I want my reward. I've earned it. I insist on having it."

She laughed. "Steve's joking, mother," she said. She faced him jauntily. "Not to-night, comrade. Wait till the wreck is more complete. Wait till the socialist commonwealth is more nearly established. Oh, you shall have it; in due time you shall have it—a man's reward."

She smiled up into his face as winsomely, as charmingly, as modestly, as a young girl would smile into her first lover's face on the eve of her betrothal.

"Good-night, Steve," she added, "and my thanks to you, and good luck to you. Keep on. Revenge is sweet. But remember: there's a thing that's sweeter than revenge."

She helped him into his overcoat as she talked, gave him his cap, went with him to the door, and closed it behind him as he passed out. When he was gone the old woman said to her:

"Mary, I don't like the look o' things."

"There's nothing to worry about, mother."

"But I don't like the look o' things," she repeated. "That man ain't safe. I wish he wouldn't come here any more."

"Why, he's as harmless as a baby."

"He ain't. He's dangerous. I see it in his eyes. He'll kill you some day; I know he will."

Mary Bradley laughed, and put her arm around the old woman's waist, and kissed her wrinkled face.

"You dear old fool!" she said. "Neither Crœsus nor the king could induce him to hurt me by so much as a pin-prick. I can twist him round my little finger every hour in the day."

"Do you love him, Mary?"

"Let me tell you, mother. For what he has told me to-night, for the hope he has given me, for the promise of pure joy he has set before me, I adore him."

CHAPTER XVI

"THE DARKNESS DEEPENS"

THERE was no abatement in the vigor with which the rector of Christ Church attacked the sins of capitalism, the curse of wage-slavery, the glaring inequalities of the existing social order. In the pulpit, on the platform, to the man in the street, anywhere, everywhere, in season and out of season, he preached his new gospel of the brotherhood of man. But he did not call it a new gospel. He called it the old gospel, proclaimed by Jesus Christ as the one foundation on which all human character and conduct must be built. He was acclaimed by the toiler, and cursed by the capitalist. His fame spread beyond the borders of his city and his state. The newspapers reported his sermons and speeches as matters of interest to the general public. Soap-box orators quoted him with approval. Socialists regarded him as one of their own kind; not quite, but almost persuaded to an acceptance of all their tenets and beliefs. There were some things in the socialistic creed to which he could not yet subscribe. He had little sympathy with the purely materialistic conception of the cause and basis of either happiness or misery in this life. He believed, with his Lord, that "The life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment."

He could not concede the right of men and women to free themselves from a marriage bond which has become burdensome save for the one cause set down in Holy Scripture.

He could not quite assent to the doctrine that confiscation of private property by the state, beyond the customary exercise of the right of eminent domain, in

order that it might be administered for the economic betterment of all, was either politically wise or ethically correct.

Certainly he was not ready to participate in a sudden and violent overturning of the existing social order for the purpose of hastening the coming of the social commonwealth.

But he was absorbed in the idea of, and immersed in the plans for alleviating the hardships of the poor. He looked to and labored for such a rearrangement of the social order, that all men who toiled, either with hand or brain, should share alike in the largess of the fruitful earth, and in the material bounty of God.

It was his aim so to instil the religion of Christ into the hearts of the classes that ultimately there would be no classes, no swollen fortunes, no dire poverty, no social distinctions, but that all men would dwell together in Christian fellowship as did the brethren of the early Church.

And it was his desire and ambition that this plan of Christian living should have its foremost modern exemplification in the parish of Christ Church.

In his night interview with the bishop he had stated his position with such cogent reasoning, with such eloquent appeal, that that dignitary of the Church was not prepared to confound his argument or to suppress his enthusiasm either by episcopal wisdom or by fatherly remonstrance. Moreover he taught nothing in contravention of the doctrines of the Church. He preached no gospel that had not been preached by the Carpenter of Nazareth among the hills of Galilee, on the shores of Gennesareth, or in the shadow of the temple at Jerusalem. No wonder the bishop could not decide which horn of the dilemma to take concerning the matter in controversy. No wonder the protesting parishioners became impatient at his delay. Many of them, indeed, grew discouraged and then indifferent. Some of them severed their connection with the parish

absolutely and attached themselves to St. Timothy's up-town. Others absented themselves entirely from divine service, or became occasional attendants at other Protestant churches in the city. The prominent and pompous woman who had threatened to go over to the Church of Rome carried out her threat. She felt that now she ran no farther risk of contamination, that she was where socialism is practically, if not officially, anathema.

But there was no diminution in the attendance at the services of Christ Church. As familiar faces disappeared from the pews new ones, stamped with the insignia of toil, took their places. No magnet ever drew to itself the filings of steel with surer power than this magnetic preacher drew to himself the human filings from the social mass.

But the institutional life of the church suffered. As the old workers, displeased or disheartened, or unduly influenced, forsook their tasks, it was with extreme difficulty that others were found with sufficient zeal and adaptability and religious culture to fill their places. Indeed, many places remained wholly unfilled, and the rector and his curate were obliged to do double duty by taking up the neglected work and doing it as best they could. Funds for these church activities were also lacking. Many of the rich and the well-to-do who had contributed liberally in the past were now giving niggardly sums, or were withholding their contributions altogether. And in the absence of both workers and money it was not strange that the work itself should languish.

But the rector was not discouraged. He felt that the tide would eventually turn; that God would not permit the institutions of His Church permanently to suffer, nor His poor always to go uncared for. And who could say that it was not His plan to bring "trouble and distress" upon His people in order to make more emphatic the ushering in of that new social

régime in which poverty and trouble and distress could never gain a foothold.

It was not only the guilds of the church that suffered for lack of money; the church itself was deplorably short of funds. Receipts from pew rents had fallen off sadly. Pewholders, reminded of their obligations, replied that those obligations were conditioned on the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and not the gospel of Karl Marx, from the pulpit of Christ Church. The alms-basins which in the old days had been presented at the altar heaped with the bank bills placed thereon by the wealthy and the well-to-do, came now, sparsely lined instead, with the nickels and the pennies of the poor. And while widows' mites might be gloriously acceptable in the eyes of God, it needed vastly more of them than were received to carry on successfully the activities of Christ Church. The Episcopal and Convention Fund assessment was hopelessly in arrears; so was the missionary allotment; even the rector's salary was in jeopardy by reason of the lack of funds. When that salary was paid to him he found it necessary to use a good part of it to relieve cases of destitution, and to meet other emergencies which could not, in these days, otherwise be met. But he did not complain. He simply set about to see what he could personally do without, and he admonished his wife that the cost of living at the rectory would need to be reduced. On the following Sunday, after reading the announcements, he called the attention of the congregation to the fact that, owing to the withdrawal of financial support by many members of the parish, the funds of the church, available for carrying on its work, had been exhausted, and the treasury was facing a serious deficit. He therefore appealed to all attendants on the services, and to all those interested in supporting the activities and maintaining the dignity of Christ Church, to be liberal in their contributions, that the Lord's work might be unhampered and undiminished.

From a few there came an immediate response to his appeal. But many heard it with indifference, or else doled out grudgingly a few more pennies. One hard-handed toiler, as he shuffled down the aisle at the close of the service, was heard to say:

"I t'ought religion was free. If I got to pay money for it like I do for beer, w'y I guess I can git along wit'out it."

There were many more, not so outspoken, across whose minds trickled the same thought. It is strange how the ardor of men in any cause, not even excepting the cause of religion, will become suddenly dampened by an appeal to them to support it by liberal contributions of money.

Of those who had espoused the cause of the rector from the start, the ranks were practically unbroken. Those who believed in him and adhered to him were still faithful, and devoted to the carrying out of his purpose. Yet some among them, especially men of experience and business training, began to be doubtful of the outcome. More than one of them, watching the course of events, noting the depletion of funds and the circumscribing of activities, expressed frankly to the rector their fears for the future. He made light of their doubts and urged them to still greater zeal. He assured them that the battle would eventually be won, that the principles of the Christian religion were at stake, and that God would not permit the integrity of His Church to be successfully assailed, nor the upholders of His gospel to go down to defeat. So he inspired them anew, and the fight went on.

But no person in the entire parish kept in closer touch with the situation, or was better informed concerning the progress of events, than was Mary Bradley. She exhausted all possible sources of information to keep herself conversant with conditions. Passionately desirous of seeing the rector of Christ Church win his battle for social righteousness, she knew, nevertheless,

that he was waging a losing fight, and that he had already reached the point where capitulation was necessary, if he would save himself. She had said as much to Barry Malleson weeks ago. She longed to say it now to the rector himself. She could as little bear to see him go on, unwittingly, to sure destruction, as she could bear to see him yield the splendid position he had taken in behalf of humble humanity.

When Barry came in one day he told her he had heard that the vestry was about to curtail the rector's salary, or to refuse payment of it altogether, on the ground that he had violated his contract with the parish by engaging in activities antagonistic to the Church and to the Christian religion.

"Barry," she said, "I want you to go with me to the rectory."

He looked up inquiringly.

"What—what for?" he asked.

"I want to tell that man to call quits, and save his life," she replied. "If he doesn't, they'll murder him."

Barry stared at her in astonishment.

"Why," he stammered, "it—it isn't as bad as that."

"It's just the same as murder," she said. "They're taking the clothes off his back, the bread out of his mouth, the heart that strengthens and glorifies him out of his body. Come!"

She had already put on her hat and coat, and was drawing on her gloves. Barry followed her in blind obedience. Why she had asked him to go with her he did not stop to inquire. It was enough that she wished it. He would have followed her, at her bidding, to the end of the world. But she knew why she had asked him. In these crucial days the rector's name must be kept above the slightest taint of suspicion. Therefore Mary Bradley must not go alone to visit him. And Barry Malleson was the only person on earth whom she would be willing to have hear her message, save the person to whom she should speak it. For Barry

was absolutely faithful, honorable and simple-minded. So, together, they went out and walked up the street in the mild sunlight of the January day, paying little heed to the glances cast at them, ignorant of the comments that their appearance in each other's company aroused; comments wise and foolish, grave and gay, scandalous and laudatory, according to the cleanness of heart and clearness of vision of those who made them.

Some one, mischievously inclined, entering a department store, saw Jane Chichester sitting at a counter, and said: "Jane, the king of comedy and the queen of fallacy are passing by."

"What's that?" asked Miss Chichester.

"Oh, Barry Malleson and Mrs. Bradley just went up the sidewalk together."

"The idea!" exclaimed Miss Chichester. And with nervous fingers she thrust her change into her purse and her purchases into her shopping-bag, and hurried to the street. Sure enough, just turning the next corner, she saw them—and she followed after them. When she too reached the corner they were half-way down the block on the side street, and at the next crossing they turned and went over toward the rectory of Christ Church. Miss Chichester saw them pass up the walk, mount the steps, and enter the house. A wave of mad jealousy swept into her heart; an unreasoning fear settled down upon her. What did it mean? Why did they appear to be so absorbed in each other? Why were they seeking the rector of Christ Church? Had there been some sudden resolve upon matrimony? some sudden decision to have the marriage service performed before any restraining influence or actual force could be exerted by Barry's family?

So Miss Chichester, too, crossed the street, went up the rectory steps, rang the bell and was admitted to the house.

Barry and Mrs. Bradley were in the study with the

minister. A maid announced that Miss Chichester was in the drawing-room and desired to see Mr. Farrar at once.

"Say to her that I will soon be at liberty," said the rector.

"We shall keep you but a few minutes," declared Mrs. Bradley.

But Barry looked up with startled eyes and exclaimed:

"Oh, I'm sure Jane is in no haste. It's—nothing important. She needn't wait. Let her come back later."

But the maid had already disappeared, and Mr. Farrar made no effort to modify the message sent to his waiting guest.

"What I came for," said Mrs. Bradley, "is to tell you that in my judgment the time has come for you to drop your fight against the opposing forces in your church, and make terms with your vestry."

"Mrs. Bradley! Why do you come to me with that message? You have been one of my most valiant supporters."

"Because they are going to crush you unless you yield. Your church is already on the way to destruction."

"That's treason, Mrs. Bradley. Have you changed your opinion about the righteousness of my cause?"

"Not in the slightest degree."

"And do you think then that God will permit unrighteousness to prevail?"

"I know little about God's purposes. I only know what power these men have to destroy you, and I know they are going to use their power without mercy."

Barry broke in. "That's right, Farrar," he said. "Phil and Boston and the rest of them have got you in their grip. I heard to-day that they're going to choke off your salary. That's where the shoe will pinch. So Mary and I have decided that you'd better call the

whole thing off, and get back into harness as it were."

"Let me understand you," said the rector. "It is not because either of you think that I am in the wrong that you advocate surrender?"

"No," came the answer in unison.

"But because you believe it to be expedient?"

"Exactly," replied Barry. But Mrs. Bradley added:

"I am thinking of your family."

"I, too, have thought of my family," came the response. "We are all in God's hands. I have no doubt, if the worst should come to the worst, He will point out to me a way to provide for them."

"And I am thinking also of your career," she added.

"A career," he said, "built upon the suppression of honest thought, and made successful by fawning upon the rich while the poor are crying out for social, spiritual and material bread, would be a most inglorious and unhallowed thing."

Then she spoke more bluntly.

"You are too visionary," she said. "You are too spiritual, too religious and high-minded to cope with the crowd that is hunting you. They have planned your destruction, and they are going to accomplish it. There isn't any God anywhere who can save you. You've got to save yourself or you'll perish. I know it. I had to tell you this. I wouldn't be human if I kept it to myself."

He did not reprove her or try to reason with her. The argumentative stage in the struggle had long passed by. But he was equally blunt and insistent in his answer.

"Mrs. Bradley," he said, "if I were sure that my crusade would bring me to the debtor's prison or the hangman's rope, I would not abate one jot or tittle from my effort. My reason and my conscience have convinced me that I am right; and my duty to God

and myself and my fellow-men impels me irresistibly forward."

He said it with such intensity of expression, both of looks and voice, that Barry, easily moved as he always was, half rose from his chair, and brought his hands together with a resounding whack.

"That's the stuff!" he exclaimed. "Farrar, you're game to the backbone! I'm with you, old man; count on me!" Then his eyes fell upon Mrs. Bradley, and he began to apologize. "Pardon me, Mary! I didn't think. You don't want him to stick it out, do you?"

She did not answer him at once. Her eyes were moist, and her lip was trembling. When she did speak she said:

"You don't need to apologize, Barry. You've spoken for me."

She rose and held out her hand to the minister in farewell. "I have done my errand," she said. "I came on it sincerely and earnestly and with a good conscience, and—I thank God it has failed."

It was not an expression of piety, for she was not pious; but no other words, in that moment, could have embodied her thought. She turned toward the door.

"Come, Barry," she said, "we'll go now."

But Barry, suddenly remembering the waiting guest in the drawing-room, replied:

"Why, I—I think I'll stay here in Farrar's study for a while. I—he's got some books here I want to look at."

"No, Barry. I want you with me. I want you to go to the street with me, and walk back with me to my office."

This time he did not demur. He saw that she was in earnest. He knew that she had some good reason for wishing him to go, and he went.

As they passed down the hall they met Jane Chichester at the door of the drawing-room. Her cheeks were scarlet and her eyes were wild.

"What does this mean?" she exclaimed. "Barry Malleson, what have you been doing?"

"Why," stammered Barry, "I—we—we've been calling on the rector."

"What for?" she demanded.

"Is it necessary," asked Mary Bradley, quietly, "that you should know?"

"I've a right to know," she replied. "I've a right to protect this man. You've bewitched him and deceived him till he doesn't know his own mind. Mr. Farrar!" she cried, "what has happened here? I must know! I will know!"

The rector, standing in the doorway of his study, had looked on amazed at this spectacle of insane jealousy. He realized, suddenly, that he must take control of the situation.

"Jane Chichester," he said, "come into my study at once." He spoke quietly, but with a voice and manner that compelled obedience to his command. And Jane Chichester went, but she went in a storm of tears, a woman's last and most effective weapon of defense.

The siege being thus raised, Mrs. Bradley and her escort left the house, descended the steps, and passed down the walk to the street. There Barry paused long enough to bare his head to the winter air, and mop the perspiration from his brow.

"Barry," said Mrs. Bradley, "you're a lucky man. I congratulate you."

"It was," panted Barry, "a devilish narrow escape."

"I don't mean that. You're not married to the woman, are you?"

"Good Lord, no!"

"Nor engaged to her?"

"Heaven forbid!"

"Well, a man who is capable of arousing such insane jealousy as that in the breast of a woman to whom he is neither married nor engaged is one among ten thousand. I beg that you'll not lose your head over it."

"My head," replied Barry, "is safe enough, but about one more adventure like that would send my mind to the scrap-heap."

On a certain day, late in January, Bricky Hoover was peremptorily dismissed from the employ of the Malleson Manufacturing Company. It was charged against him that he had been guilty of gross negligence, of sabotage, of impertinence to the manager of the mills. But all of his fellow-employees knew, indeed all of the wage-workers in the city knew that the real reason for his dismissal was that he had been too aggressive in behalf of union labor, and that his aggressiveness and persistency had resulted in a victory for the men. He was the first to go because he had been the most prominent. Others would follow; there was little doubt of that. It was apparent that the company had started in on a policy of weeding out agitators and strike-promoters. The only question was who would be the next one to be dismissed. Feeling among the men ran high. Sympathy with the discharged employee was general among the laboring classes. Resentment over the manner in which he had been thrust out was deep and wide-spread. Would union labor stand for it? Of course union labor would not.

The discharge was on Friday. On the afternoon of the following Sunday a mass-meeting of the Malleson employees was held at Carpenter's Hall, and, with scarcely a dissenting vote, a resolution was adopted to the effect that if Thomas Hoover was not reinstated in his position, without condition, within twenty-four hours from the time of presenting the resolution to the officers of the company, there would be a walk-out of every workman employed in the mills.

The committee in charge of the resolution presented it to the president of the company at his office on Monday morning. He called the attention of his visitors to the fact that his employees had recently signed a

contract, agreeing to remain in the employ of the company for one year. They replied that the agreement also contained a clause to the effect that no one should be discriminated against on account of any part he had taken in procuring the new wage-scale, or by reason of his affiliation with union labor.

It was in vain that the president endeavored to convince them that Hoover's discharge was due solely to his reprehensible personal conduct. They would not be convinced. He called the manager of the mills and the foreman of the shop in which Hoover had worked as his witnesses. The committee saw in this only a carefully worked out plan to betray the men whom the company feared, and throttle union labor. They would have no excuses, no subterfuges, they would listen to no argument. Their demand was clear and imperative; it must be answered by a categorical yes or no. The president asked for a week within which he might sift the evidence, and consider the demand. They replied that they had no discretionary power; that if the demand was not complied with by noon of the following day every laborer in the company's employ would quit his job and stay out until Hoover was reinstated. This was their ultimatum.

Mr. Malleson dismissed the committee with a wave of his hand. He had nothing further to say to them. But his jaws were set, and his eyes were like steel.

In the afternoon he called the members of his board together and presented the situation to them. It was plainly apparent to all of them that Hoover's conduct, leading to his dismissal, was but part of a plan to force a strike, with or without cause, at the Malleson mills. What ulterior purpose lay back of it all they could not understand. It was clear that the men were being led, by designing persons, to their own destruction. But for whose benefit? That was the mystery of it. And what was to be done? If Hoover were to be reinstated now doubtless a similar situation would be

created within a week. It might be better to meet the issue squarely, and settle the matter once for all. Of course a fight would spell disaster; but, if the men were bound to strike, they might as well strike now and have done with it. The whole thing was so absurd, so unreasonable, so outrageously unjust, that the sooner it was disposed of the better.

Barry Malleson, sitting at the directors' table, had heard the discussion thus far without comment. His suggestions at the meetings of the board had, theretofore, been given such scant consideration that he had grown tired of making them. But he raised his voice now in mild protest at what was plainly the belligerent attitude of his fellow-members.

"Oh, say," he inquired, "can't this thing be fixed up somehow? Why not take Bricky back? What harm would it do? I know the fellow personally. He's not at all a bad sort."

The president of the company turned his head away in ill-concealed disgust; but Philip Westgate, sitting at a corner of the table, seemed to find Barry's comment of interest and began to cross-question him.

"Has any one requested you," he asked, "to intercede for Hoover?"

"Not a soul," replied Barry. "I'm doing it on my own responsibility."

"You say you are personally acquainted with the man; do you happen to know whether he is on terms of particular friendship with Stephen Lamar?"

"Why, yes. I've seen them together a good deal. They both belong to the Socialist League in which I myself am somewhat interested."

The president of the Malleson Manufacturing Company turned his head still farther away, and a look of deeper disgust spread over his usually immobile face.

"And the secretary of that League," continued Westgate, "is the woman known as Mary Bradley?"

"That's her name, yes."

"Lamar is in love with her, isn't he?"

"I don't know, Phil, but I shouldn't be a bit surprised if he was. I'm in love with her myself."

Westgate turned to the board.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I think I can solve the mystery."

But before he had an opportunity to explain, Richard Malleson swung around in his office chair and confronted his son. His face was scarlet, and his eyes shot fire.

"How dare you," he exclaimed, "in a company of gentlemen, boast openly of your disgraceful relation with this notorious woman! I'll not permit it!"

Barry's eyes opened wide with surprise. He was not angry. Nothing ever angered him. But he appeared to be deeply grieved.

"Why, father," he began, "Mrs. Bradley is a genuinely good woman——"

But his father, in a rage now, interrupted him.

"Not a word!" he cried. "I'll not listen to you. I'll not permit you to sit on this board. If you don't leave the room at once, I'll adjourn this meeting."

The gentlemen who sat at the directors' table gazed fearfully from father to son and held their tongues. It was not their quarrel.

Barry rose slowly from his chair, looking at his father with wide and inquiring eyes. He did not seem quite to understand it all, except that he had been ordered to leave the room.

"All right, father," he said; "I'll go. I'll go."

He crossed uncertainly to the door, turned and looked back for a moment, in apparent wonder, at the astonished and apprehensive faces of the silent group, and then went out. He got his hat and coat and put them on, and walked straight to the headquarters of the Socialist League in the Potter Building.

After he had left the room Westgate explained to the board his theory of the threatened strike. He had

heard that Mary Bradley had declared, in court, at the termination of her unsuccessful suit, that she would have revenge. She was having it, that was all. Shrewd, persistent, resourceful, she was using Lamar to turn labor loose on Richard Malleson and his company. And what, then, could be done? If Barry only had brains, thought Westgate, he might be of some service in this crisis. But Barry was as useless now as a baby. The woman herself was unapproachable, and Lamar, who, on former occasions, had been found to be secretly pliable, would hardly be so base now as to sell out both his constituents and his sweetheart. Moreover, it was fairly certain that labor, having taken the bit in its teeth, would be uncontrollable. And an answer must be forthcoming within twenty-four hours. The board decided that there could be but one answer.

When the committee called, on the following day, they received a "categorical no" in reply to their demand. And, after twelve o'clock of the same day, every wheel and lathe and trip-hammer in the Malleson mills was left without its attendant. Only the seven non-union men remained at work, and they, perforce, were given a holiday.

So the oft-repeated struggle between capital and labor, with the strike as labor's weapon, began anew. Capital and the friends of capital in the entire city felt that labor had been unjust in its demand, and that the strike was nothing more nor less than an outrage. Labor and the friends of labor, on the other hand, felt that capital, in attempting to choke the life out of unionism, and set its heel more firmly on the neck of the workingman, had gone too far and must be taught that the dignity of labor and the rights of the individual laborer would, at all hazards, be maintained.

The Reverend Mr. Farrar was one of those who warmly espoused the cause of the striking employees. He saw, in the discharge of Bricky Hoover, and in the company's refusal to reinstate him, only the opening

shot in a new war on the rights of the city's workingmen; and he did not hesitate to so express himself, nor did he hesitate to offer his sympathy, and such assistance as he was able to give, to the strikers.

The businessmen of the city, whose interests were likely to suffer severely in the event of a prolonged strike, presented a formal request, both to the company and to its employees, to submit the matter in dispute between them to arbitration. And both refused. The men on the ground that their demand was too unequivocally plain and just to be submitted to the uncertain judgment of arbitrators; and the company on the ground that it could not, without loss of self-respect, concede to any one the right to say whom it should or should not employ at its works.

So the strike went on. The plant remained idle. The fires in the furnaces were drawn. Only watchmen remained on duty. Some half-finished orders, sent to a smaller mill of another company to be completed, precipitated a strike at that plant also; and then the workmen of a third mill, infected with the spirit of revolt, determined to take advantage of the situation to better their own condition, and joined in the general upheaval. The original strike had not been called in exact accordance with union rules. The men had been too precipitate in their action, and some of the union officials felt that they should have been sent back to work in order that union discipline might prevail. But their cause was so entirely just, the conduct of the company had been so flagrant, and its purpose so plain, the sympathy of union labor in the city was so overwhelmingly with the men, that their strike was endorsed, not only by the union to which they belonged, but by the federated unions of the city as well. With this backing the fight went on. Silence hung over the Malleson mills. No smoke ascended from the chimneys. No roar of forge or rattle of machinery was heard there. No sight or sound or soul of industry

gave life or movement to the place. The very snow upon the paths that crossed the yard, paths trodden daily in happier times by human hundreds, lay now untracked and undisturbed. Idle men loitered along the streets of the city, or stood aimlessly on sunny corners. Merchants were despondent and fearful. The business of the town was in a state of alarming depression. The saloons alone retained their normal prosperity. By and by came hardship, destitution, misery. Not all workmen are sufficiently provident to lay by enough to tide them over a rainy day. Many of those who were, found their resources drained as the days of the strike grew long. The strike-fund voted by the union was but a pittance in comparison with the needs which it helped to supply, and even that fund drew toward exhaustion with the prolongation of the struggle.

Perhaps those who suffered most were day-laborers not affiliated with any union, employed outside the mills and factories, whose occupations, indirectly affected by the strike, and by the general business depression, were now closed to them. They, indeed, were in sore straits. Public aid was asked for, but the response was neither quick nor liberal. It is one thing to sympathize with the victims of disaster; it is quite another thing to open your purse to them.

It was the first of February when the strike was called. Through all that month severe weather prevailed. There were howling blizzards, unprecedented snowfalls, arctic temperatures. It is no wonder that by the first of March the suffering among the poor had become wide-spread, intense and tragic.

And all because the Malleson Manufacturing Company had dismissed, and would not take back into its employ, one big, red-haired, raw-boned, good-natured workman; and because his fellow-laborers would not work without him.

High cause indeed for which to plunge and hold a

city in distress. The rights of capital! The dignity of labor! Strange shibboleths to be bandied about the streets while idle men grew desperate, and women and little children were starving and freezing in destitute and miserable homes.

CHAPTER XVII

A HOPELESS QUEST

THERE was work and a plenty of it for the charitably inclined to do during those sad March days. Some noble-souled women, caring not which side in the conflict was right or which side wrong, went about like ministering angels to relieve the destitute and care for the suffering. Ruth Tracy was one of these. Her days were filled with her hard and unlovely tasks among the poor, and her nights were often sleepless because of the scenes she had witnessed by day.

In her visits to the homes of the destitute she had often met the rector of Christ Church. His errands were similar to hers. They counseled together, they compared notes, they parceled out relief. Together they traveled through snow-burdened, wind-swept, desolate streets. More and more he came to rely upon her big-hearted judgment, and her sympathetic aid. He shared with her the problem of the poor that lay so heavily on his own heart. She became necessary to him, invaluable, indispensable. And as for her, his nobility of character, his great passion for suffering humanity, his tireless energy in the doing of all good deeds, these things loomed ever larger and larger in her mind, as she watched him day by day in the performance of his self-appointed and self-rewarded tasks.

In these tragic days Barry Malleson also did heroic service. It is true that he was not possessed, to any considerable extent, of the power of initiative. And it is true also that he had little capacity for making organized effort. But, acting under the advice and in-

struction of others, he made his work invaluable. His chair at the office of the Malleson Manufacturing Company had been practically deserted for weeks. He was not needed there. As a matter of fact he never had been needed there. But the cessation of the company's activities, and the president's attitude of hostility toward him, had made his presence at the factory even less necessary, not to say less welcome, than it had ever been before. He was entirely free to engage in charitable work, and to the best of his ability, and to the extent of his means, he did engage in it. And it was none the less to his credit that his labors in this behalf were carried on under the direct supervision of the rector of Christ Church, and of his zealous co-workers, Ruth Tracy and Mary Bradley. Many a desolate home was lightened, for the time being at least, by his cheery words, his winning smile, and his material gifts as he made his scheduled calls or accompanied the Widow Bradley on her pathetic rounds. For she, too, had vacated an office chair to give her time to charity. She traveled the streets of poverty-stricken sections by day, and many a night she spent at the bedside of the sick, or in well-nigh hopeless efforts to comfort those in the deepest of all affliction. What little money she had, beyond an amount sufficient to supply her own daily needs, was soon exhausted, for she could not bear to see suffering while she had a penny to relieve it. But the sympathy of her heart, the comfort of her voice, the work of her hands, these things were inexhaustible.

She sat, one night, at the bedside of a dying child—a poor, half-starved, half-frozen waif of a girl, offspring of improvident and penniless parents, innocent victim of the stubbornness of forces contending for economic mastery. The tossing of the shrunken little body had ceased, and no moaning came now from the pale, pinched lips. The child lay, mindless, motionless, with weakly fluttering pulse, waiting, unwittingly, for the

long release. Out in the one other room the mother sat, huddled over the embers of a wood fire in a broken stove, her elbows on her knees and her chin in her hands, hopeless and horror-stricken. At midnight Barry Malleson came in. He had not knocked at the door. He had found knocking in these doleful days to be a superfluous task. The woman barely noticed him as he entered. She did not lift her face from her hands. By the light of the tallow dip in the other room he saw Mary Bradley sitting at the bedside of the child. She motioned to him to come in.

"Will I disturb her?" he whispered, as he tiptoed to the door.

"No," she replied; "nothing will ever disturb her again."

"I heard you were here," he said, "and I came to walk home with you. It's after midnight."

"That was very thoughtful of you, Barry. But I shall not go home to-night. I can't leave the woman, and I can't leave the child. Don't you see I can't leave her?"

His eyes followed hers toward the bed, and rested for a moment on the white, pathetic face, marked with the sign of speedy dissolution, lying quietly against the soiled pillow.

"I see," he said. "What's to be done?"

"Nothing," she replied, and repeated, "nothing; nothing."

"You know," he continued, "I'd stop this whole fiendish business in five minutes if I had any voice in the board; but they won't listen to me, not one of them."

"I know, Barry. You're not to blame. You've done everything in your power. You're a hero. But, my God, it's horrible!"

Tears sprang to her eyes, and she wiped them away. Barry's heart was touched. It was the first time in all this dreadful period of her ministry that he had seen

her weep. He went closer to her, and laid a pitying hand on her shoulder.

"You're all broken up," he said. "You've got to get some rest. You must go home in the morning and stay there."

She did not appear to heed his admonition, but she put her hand up, and rested it on his.

"There's a favor I want to ask of you, Barry. I've been thinking about it to-day. You know, a long time ago, you brought me a check as a gift from your company, and I refused it. You brought it again and I still refused it. You urged me many times to take it. Is that check still in existence?"

"Yes, I have it. It was charged up to our charity account when it was issued, and it still stands that way."

"Well, Barry, my pride is all gone now. If you should offer it to me again I'd—I'd take it."

"You shall have it. It's yours. I'll bring it to you the first thing in the morning."

"Thank you! I can do so much with the money now. Oh, so much! It will be a godsend to Factory Hill."

The shawl-clad woman in the kitchen rose, gathered a few sticks of wood from a corner of the room, thrust them into the stove, and again seated herself, crouching, silent, over the inadequate fire.

"And there's another thing, Barry, but I can't tell you that to-night. I've got to have a stronger heart when I tell you that, because you've been so unselfish, and brave, and splendid in every way, and I dread to hurt you."

He looked down at her questioningly.

"What is it, Mary?"

"Not to-night. I said, not to-night."

"Very well. Then if I can't do anything more for you I'll be going. You have food enough to last till morning?"

"Yes; I brought some with me when I came."

"And wood for the stove?"

"Yes, there's nothing you can do."

"All right. I'll be back early in the morning."

He glanced again at the all but pulseless figure on the bed, and turned toward the door.

"Barry!"

"Yes?"

She had risen and stood facing him.

"Barry, God bless you! Now go."

He went softly out through the bare room in which the grief-crazed mother still sat crouched and moaning, and passed thence into the night. But Mary Bradley sank back into her chair and let her tears flow unchecked. In happier days she would have scorned to ask God's blessing on any one. But now only God was great enough to be good to this witless and tender-hearted hero.

An hour later the pulse that had fluttered so long at the thin little wrist grew still. Mary Bradley performed such trifling offices as the dead require, drew the crumpled and untidy sheet up over the pitiful young face, and, through the remaining hours of the night, held hopeless vigil with a mother who would not be consoled.

At daybreak she went out into the face of the bleak March wind to hunt for Stephen Lamar.

She found him alone, in the early morning, at strike-headquarters, shivering over a half-heated stove.

"Steve," she said, "call it off. For God's sake, call it off!"

"Call what off, Mary?"

"The strike. Call it off. I can't stand this any longer. I can't spend another night like the one I've just been through. It's too terrible."

"But it was for your sake I brought it on."

"Then for my sake call it off. If the sin is mine I want my soul cleared of it to-day."

He did not answer her for a moment. He looked out wearily through the unclean window into the cheerless street. Then he said:

"I may as well tell you the truth, Mary. I can't stop it. It's gone too far. I've been up all night with the committee. There isn't a thing we can do."

"You can send the men back to work."

"We can't. Malleson won't take 'em. He won't have a union man in his plant. He says so, and he means it. Next week he opens up the mills to non-union labor. Then there'll be trouble. My God, there'll be trouble!"

His face was white and haggard, and his under lip trembled as he spoke. She looked at him incredulously.

"You don't mean to say," she asked, "that he won't let his old men go back to work? Not if you kept Bricky Hoover out?"

"Not if we sent Bricky Hoover straight to hell to-day. Not a single striker gets work at Malleson's mills again."

She dropped into the chair he had placed for her when she came in, and gripped the arms of it.

"But that"—she protested—"that isn't human."

"I know it isn't human. But what can we do? When Dick Malleson makes up his mind no power in the universe can move him."

"Why, Steve, women are starving and freezing. Little children are dying. The man has no heart, no soul."

"True! And if he tries to break the strike with scabs he'll have no mill."

"Steve! There won't be violence; there won't be bloodshed?"

"I can't tell what there'll be. The men are desperate, and they'll do desperate things."

"But I won't have bloodshed! I've got enough to answer for as it is. I tell you, Steve, you've got to stop it."

"And I tell you I can't stop it."

"Then I'll find some one who can. Mr. Farrar will help me."

At the mention of the clergyman's name the man's face flushed. For Mary Bradley to go from Lamar to seek the rector's aid was simply to pour oil on a smoldering fire. She had been already too much in this minister's company under pretense of visiting the poor. Why should she hold him, Stephen Lamar, her avowed lover, at arm's length, while bestowing clandestine favors on this discredited hypocrite of the Church? No fire burns so fiercely as the fire of jealousy.

"Oh, Farrar!" he sneered. "What will he do? Go pray with old man Malleson who doesn't give a damn for his pious advice? I tell you this fellow has lost his grip. Capital derides him; labor laughs at him; you might as well ——"

"Stop! You can't slander him in my presence. He's been the one strong, heroic figure in all this dreadful disaster, and the whole city knows it."

The man's jealous wrath blazed up in words befitting the loafer of the street.

"Oh, you; you think he's a little tin god on wheels! You think he's the greatest thing that ever came down the pike! I say he's a damned hypocrite and a menace to society, and I'll prove it."

She rose from her chair with face aflame and anger flashing from her eyes.

"Steve," she said, "take that back. You coward, take that back!"

He saw that he had overreached himself and grew suddenly penitent.

"Forgive me, Mary! I don't know what I'm saying. I'm driven crazy by this infernal strike—and by you."

"By me?"

"Yes, by you. You have no pity. I'm eating my heart out for you, and you're as cold as an arctic moon."

"Do you want me to be kind to you?"

"It's the only want I have."

"Then stop this strike. Stop it and ask anything decent of me and it's yours. But until you do stop it, don't speak to me, nor look at me, nor so much as whisper my name."

She turned and swept out from his presence, and when she was gone he dropped back into his chair, stared at the blank walls around him, and cursed the evil days on which he had so ingloriously fallen.

But he resolved to win back the favor of the woman for whose sake he would joyously have walked straight to perdition.

Through the bleak March morning, past piles of grimy, half-melted snow, Mary Bradley went. Two blocks up, at the corner of the street which led from the mill, she met Barry Malleson. He had gone early, as he had said he would, to procure her check. He drew it from his pocket now and gave it to her.

"It only needs your endorsement," he said, "and you can get the money at any bank."

"Thank you, Barry! Now I want you to go with me."

"Where?" And before she could reply he added: "It doesn't matter where. I'll go, and be glad to."

But she told him where she wished him to go.

"I'm going to see Mr. Farrar," she said. "Perhaps he can do something to put an end to this unbearable tragedy."

They found him in his study. The darkness of the morning had made necessary the lighting of his table-lamp, and vague shadows filled the room and moved unsteadily up and down his gray face as he bent to his work or sat back in his chair to ponder. And he had work to do as well as cause to ponder. The suffering he had witnessed during these last days lay heavy on his heart. His eyes were dim with it; the lines on his face were deep with it. His sympathies were stirred

as they had never in his life been stirred before. His wife entered the room softly but he neither saw nor heard her. She paused and looked at him for a moment and then went out without speaking to him. She was not vexed nor sullen, but she was inexpressibly troubled and sad, and she pitied him. In his work among the poor he had not consulted her, nor had he asked her aid. She forgave him for that, much as it grieved her. For, of course, he knew that she had her own burdens to bear, her children to care for, her house to be kept under ever more and more straitened circumstances and embarrassing conditions. So why should he burden her with his cares or sorrows, or harass her mind by recitals of the sufferings of others? Yet she had abundant reason to be despondent and distressed, and worn out in both body and soul. Society which had ceased to recognize him had, of necessity, gradually, but unobtrusively, closed its doors to her. Her whole life, in these bitter days, was compassed by the four walls of the rectory. If she could only have been his companion and helpmate how gladly she would have borne it all. But she knew her limitations, her childish incapacity, her deplorable lack of every resource on which he might have drawn to aid him in solving his problems or in performing the tasks that confronted him. How natural it was that, in default of this aid from her, he should accept, or even seek it from another. And with this thought the poignancy of her suffering reached its climax. For she saw, or believed she saw, the place that should have been hers as her husband's friend and counselor and loyal and helpful companion successfully filled by another. What cause, other than this, could bring more bitter sorrow into the heart of a loving wife? She was not angry nor resentful, but she was inexpressibly grieved and hurt.

When Barry and his companion entered the study the minister rose and welcomed them with sad cordial-

ity. He saw that the woman was excited and distressed, and he knew that there must be some disastrous development in the already unbearable situation.

"What is it now?" he asked her. "Has any new limit of suffering been reached?"

"Yes," she replied, "my limit has been reached. I can't bear it any longer. I came to ask you to make one more effort to put an end to this horrible strife."

"Yes," echoed Barry; "she's gone the limit. I know. It's up to you and me, Farrar, to buckle in and make a whirlwind effort to end this thing now. We're the only two men on earth that can do it."

"Barry," said the rector, "it's no use. You've done all that a human being could do. And I, Mrs. Bradley, I have exhausted every effort. The men are stubborn, the mill-owners are obdurate; the thing is absolutely dead-locked."

"The mill-owners are indeed obdurate," she replied, "but the men are no longer stubborn. They've been starved and frozen into submission. They'll go back on any terms."

"Without Bricky Hoover?"

"Yes, without Bricky Hoover."

"Then why under the canopy don't they go?" asked Barry. "We'll take 'em in a minute, if they've dropped Bricky."

"They don't go," she replied, "because the company won't let them."

"Won't let them!" exclaimed Barry and the rector in unison.

"Won't let them," she repeated. "Mr. Malleson says they've repented too late. He's hired strike-breakers, scabs, thugs, to take their places."

"Who told you this?" demanded the rector.

"Steve Lamar. He says there'll be riots and bloodshed. And, if there is, the guilt of it will be on my head. You must stop it, Mr. Farrar. You must! You must!"

She dropped into a near-by chair, hid her face in her hands and fell to sobbing. It was the first time that either of these men had seen her thus broken in pride and strength, and for a moment they gazed at her and at each other in silence. Then the rector went to her, and laid a quieting hand on her shoulder.

"You mustn't give way like this," he said. "We need you. We need your courage, more now than ever before. I can't understand this. You must have been misinformed. Lamar must be mistaken. If the men are willing to go back on Mr. Malleson's terms he certainly can't refuse them; he dare not; he must not!"

He was growing as excited and indignant over the situation as was Mary Bradley herself.

"Tell him so, Mr. Farrar!" exclaimed the woman. "Please go to him and tell him so. He won't listen to the men. He won't listen to Barry. He won't listen to anybody. But maybe—there's just a chance—that if you go to him again, and tell him this, he may see the wisdom of it, the justice of it, the absolute necessity of it."

"I'll go," said the rector.

"And I'll go with you," exclaimed Barry, "to clinch the argument. He hasn't listened to me before. Maybe he will now."

She rose from her chair and looked at the two men from tear-filled eyes.

"You are both very brave," she said, "and noble. And I know you'll succeed. I know it. It can't be otherwise. If you fail it will kill me, and I'll have to go up to God with this sin on my soul."

Again the rector sought to soothe and encourage her. He did not know what she meant by her self-accusations, but he knew that this was no time to inquire. Moreover, he was eager to be off on his errand. He took her hand and, holding it in his, walked with her down the hall to his street door, trying to speak comforting words. How comforting he did not know.

What calmness came to her with his touch he did not dream. How precious in her heart she held the memory of that little journey to the outer air, he could not by any possible chance conceive.

At the street corner she left them. She did not look again at the rector. But she turned pleading eyes on Barry.

"You'll come and tell me," she implored, "what happens?"

"I'll come," said Barry, "if I get away alive."

He smiled at her, lifted his hat, and then joined the rector who was already hurrying on his way. The morning was not cold, but it was raw and misty, and the air had in it an indescribable chill. The two men walked rapidly and in silence. Shivering workmen, with despondent faces, looked at them as they passed, and some lifted their caps awkwardly from tousled heads in recognition. It was no unusual sight to see the rector and Barry on the street together in these days, and no one commented on their appearance now. The men had no grievance against Barry. He had doubtless done what he could for them, but they knew him to be absolutely helpless, and they saw no possible gleam of hope in his direction. As for the rector, he was of course a friend to labor. He had proved that to them abundantly. But they no longer looked to him to lead them up out of slavery. As Steve Lamar said, he had lost his grip, if he had ever had one. Every effort of his on their behalf had been utterly useless, if indeed he had not, by these very efforts, plunged them into still deeper servitude. He had preached the religion of Christ to those in high places and it had availed nothing. He had preached it to men ground down by capital and suffering from hunger, and it had not served to right a single wrong, or relieve a single pang of distress. What they wanted was a religion that would not only affirm their rights, but would in fact obtain them. What they wanted

was a man who could not only preach justice, but could get it; a man with material as well as spiritual power, a man who could force capital to its knees, and bring victory to the cause of labor. And the rector of Christ Church was not such a man. Wherefore they looked on with indifference as these two passed by.

Though it was still early morning Richard Malleson was in. He had been coming early to his office, and staying late. That his work and his anxiety were wearing on him there could be no doubt. His appearance indicated it. Within the last two months he had aged perceptibly. His hair had grown noticeably gray. Sharp lines had been etched into his face. His clothes no longer fitted his body snugly, and above his collar the skin of his neck hung in flabby, vertical folds. But his cold, gray eyes had lost none of their sharpness, and his square, aggressive jaws were even more firmly set than of old. He sent out word that he would see Mr. Farrar, but that Barry was not to be admitted. So the rector entered the office alone. The president of the company rose and shook hands formally with his visitor, and motioned him to a chair. Then he sat back and fingered his eye-glasses expectantly. The rector went at once to the point, as was his custom.

"My errand this morning," he said, "is to tell you that I believe a way has been opened for the immediate resumption of work at your mills."

"Yes?" There was no manifestation of surprise or of interest in either his voice or his manner.

"Yes. I understand that your men are willing to return on the old terms, without Bricky Hoover."

"I believe that is true. I was so informed by a committee yesterday."

"Then what stands in the way of a settlement?"

"Everything. We shall not take these men back."

"Why not?"

"I will tell you. We had an agreement with them which, by their strike, they have flagrantly and cause-

lessly violated. We have now, on our part, abrogated that agreement. They are irresponsible, reckless and destructive. We shall not reëmploy them."

"You don't mean to say that these men who have given the better part of their lives to your service are to be locked out? blacklisted?"

"Call it what you choose, Mr. Farrar. We are through with them. When we reopen our shops, as we shall reopen them next week, it will be to men who have not worked us injury, and in whose word and good faith we hope we can trust."

"But, Mr. Malleson, do you realize that if you bring in new men to take the places of the old ones there is sure to be trouble?"

"We look to the police and the law to protect our property and our employees, and if the police and the law are not sufficient we shall have armed deputies of our own to defend us against violence."

"Pardon me, but you will only be inviting disorder. The patience of these striking workmen is strained already to the breaking point. You cannot assume that they will stand idly by and see strangers take the places to which they believe themselves entitled. Bloodshed, in such a case, is no remote possibility."

"We assume nothing, sir, except that we have a right, under the law, to operate our works with such men as we see fit to employ. If unwarranted or violent interference with our property or our employees is resorted to, and bloodshed ensues, we shall hold ourselves in no way responsible."

The cold logic of his reply left room for no further argument. The appeal to reason having been dismissed, an appeal to sentiment was now the minister's only recourse.

"Mr. Malleson," he said, "there is one thing more which I beg you to consider. These workmen of yours are beaten. You have forced them into the last ditch. Their wives are starving and their babies are

dying. They are ready to yield every point. Unless you give them work the weak and the helpless among them will perish like beasts. You are a Christian man. I appeal to you in the name of the merciful Christ to have mercy on them."

The president of the company looked at his visitor for a full minute before replying. Then he said:

"You also are a Christian man, Mr. Farrar. And you are a minister of the gospel besides. And, as a minister, you have preached discord and discontent. You have stirred up envy and hatred in the breasts of these working people. You have roused the spirit and the passions which have led to this destitution and misery. You have sown the wind; your victims are reaping the whirlwind. It comes with poor grace from you to appeal to my sense of Christian mercy."

The rector did not resent the accusation, and he made little attempt to justify himself. He simply said:

"I have preached the gospel of Jesus Christ as I have understood it. But let us assume that I have been wrong. Let us even assume that my preaching may have been in part responsible for this disaster. The emergency is too great for any of us to pause long enough to lay the blame at another's door. We are confronted by suffering unspeakable. With one word you can relieve it. With one turn of the hand you can lift a whole community from the slough of wretchedness and despair to the very heights of happiness, and that without yielding one iota of your lawful right or personal dignity. Again I ask you, as a Christian man, to exert your power on the side of mercy."

"And again I tell you that, being a Christian man, I shall not throw this sop to the forces of evil. I can do no greater service to this community than to exert my power to crush this spirit of revolt which you and those like you have fostered here. I intend to stamp out, so far as I can, those pernicious doctrines of socialism,

of radicalism, of syndicalism by the preaching of which you and your companions and followers have brought to the people of this city hardship and suffering which you now find yourselves powerless to relieve."

"We are powerless to relieve it, Mr. Malleson. That is frankly why I come to you. And I come as man to man, with a man's message on my lips."

"As man to man!" The phrase seemed to have caught the president's attention. His face flushed as if in anger. "As man to man," he repeated. "What have I in common with you who find your companions among atheists and radicals? Why should I take counsel with you who have taken delight in warping the weak mind of a member of my family into complete acceptance of your destructive doctrines? You have made him easy prey of designing women, and a tool of sinister men. You have alienated him from his family and his friends. I say why should I listen for one moment to you?"

He half rose in his chair, struck his clenched fist on the table, and glared at his visitor in unmistakable anger.

"Mr. Malleson," replied the rector; he was still calm and deliberate, "you do me an injustice. I have done no harm to your son. But that is neither here nor there. I came to appeal to you, not for myself nor for your son, but in behalf of your starving workmen. Will you take them back?"

"I will not take them back. They left me without cause. They have assassinated my character. They have tried to wreck my business."

"They may both wreck your business and destroy your property in the end."

"Is that a threat, Mr. Farrar?"

"I make no threats; God forbid! But, since you will not listen to reason, nor be moved by pity, I must tell you frankly that in my judgment you have brought this calamity on yourself; and if you persist in the

course you are pursuing, a still worse calamity is sure to follow."

The president of the manufacturing company rose to his feet, white with rage.

"Sir," he exclaimed, "the interview is at an end!"

"As you choose," replied the minister. "But beware of the next messenger who comes. For, instead of bringing to you the olive branch which I have brought, he may bring to you the rioter's club, and the incendiary's torch."

It was doubtless a rash thing for him to say. But when his heart was hot the rector of Christ Church did not pause to consider well the words he should utter.

He left the office of the president and strode back to his home under lowering skies, through wet and dingy streets, moved by such indignation and despair as had never in his life before found lodgment in his breast. Yet he caught himself, ever and anon, wondering whether the charge that Richard Malleson had so bluntly and brutally thrust at him was in any respect true; the charge that he himself, by preaching a gospel of discontent, had helped to bring on this industrial war. He tried to evade the question, to dismiss it from his mind, but it would not down. Was he or was he not, in any degree, responsible for this economic tragedy? Mary Bradley had declared that the guilt of it lay on her soul. This was doubtless untrue. But how much of the guilt of it lay on his? Here, indeed, was food for thought.

When Bricky Hoover came into strike-headquarters that morning Lamar was still there, and he was alone. Hoover, too, had the appearance of a man who had been suffering from both a physical and a mental strain. His clothing was wrinkled and soiled, his face was swollen, his eyes were bloodshot, and when he threw his cap on the table he disclosed a tangled shock of red

hair that for twenty-four hours at least had not felt the civilizing effect of a comb.

Lamar looked up at him and scowled.

"Bricky," he said, "you were drunk last night. You were no good. Don't you know that you can't afford to swill booze while this strike is on?"

"I know it, Steve," he replied. "I admit I was drunk. But the thing got on my nerves and I had to stiddy myself somehow. I took a drop too much, that's all. What's the next move?"

"The next move is to call off the strike."

"Call it off? What for?"

"Because we're licked. And the only chance for the men to get anything is to go ask for it, one by one."

"I say we ain't licked. And they won't a man git 'is job back by goin' and askin' for it. I know. Wasn't I on the comity that went to see the old man yisterday? I crawled on me belly to 'im; told 'im I'd quit the city, leave the state, go drown meself, do anything, if he'd take the bunch back on the old terms. He snarled at me an' wouldn't listen to it. I told 'im I'd do the same thing if he'd take the men back, one by one, as he wanted 'em. He come down on me like a thousand o' brick. Said he'd ruther see his mills burn down than take back a single traitor of us. Banged 'is fist on the table an' called me a Judas Ischariot. I told you all that last night. Steve, no man can't call me a Judas Ischariot an' save 'is skin. This strike is goin' on."

"But I tell you it can't go on. The old man's got us by the throat and he's choking us to death."

"Hell! That's baby-talk! We've got him up ag'inst the wall, and he can't do a thing."

"But he's going to open up with scabs and strikebreakers."

"Let him! They won't last three days. We can hold out for ten. At the end of that time the strike'll be won."

"Bricky, you're a fool. The men can't hold out for ten days. They're starving. It's March. They'll break away from us one by one. They'll tumble over each other looking for their jobs. You won't smash Dick Malleson, but you'll smash the union."

"I say we'll smash Dick Malleson, and I know what I'm talkin' about. I know the men. I know what they'll stan' for, and I know what they won't stan' for. Ten days turns the trick."

"Bricky, I said you were a fool. I say, now, you're a damned fool! The thing can't be done. It's impossible!"

Bricky did not grow angry at the denunciation. He smiled strangely and raised his voice but slightly as he replied:

"Look here, Steve. You made a fool of me once. That was when you got me into this thing. And old man Malleson made a fool of me once. That was yiste'day, when I went beggin' to him as you told me to. They can't neither of ye make a fool o' me twice. I'm through with both o' ye. I'm goin' to smash Malleson now on me own account, for the things he said to me yiste'day. And as for you, Steve, you can go plumb to hell."

Lamar started up from his chair.

"Bricky," he shouted, "you're crazy!"

Bricky never moved nor changed the tone of his voice.

"Maybe I am," he replied. "But I ain't crazy enough to start five hunderd men on the road to perdition jest because a black-eyed, smooth-tongued woman puts me up to it. And I ain't crazy enough nor yellow-hearted enough to sell them men out jest because the same shaller-minded woman gits cold feet an' purrs it into me ears to do it, an' pays me my price fer it. Oh, I know the game! You can't put nothin' over on me!"

"Bricky, you damned, black-hearted scoundrel, get out o' here!"

And Bricky got out.

CHAPTER XVIII

A CRUEL SURPRISE

On the afternoon of the day following his fruitless interview with the president of the Malleson Manufacturing Company, the rector of Christ Church sat alone in his study, immersed in thought. Not pleasant thought; far from it. The times were too sadly out of joint for that, the outlook was too darkly threatening. His own path was filled, not only with obstacles ahead, but with failures and wrecks behind. His dream of fusing the classes together in Christian fellowship in Christ Church had not been fulfilled. His months of effort in that behalf had not only been wasted, but had resulted in widening the breach between the very classes he would have brought together. He had succeeded only in crippling and disorganizing his church, and in splitting the body of it in twain. He had offended, antagonized, and driven from his communion, many of the chief supporters of the church, and not a few of its most devout and zealous members. Alas! their places had not been filled by people of any class. He had made no substantial inroad into the ranks of the toilers. Few of those who had at first flocked to his standard remained to help him fight his battles. Fewer still accepted the creed of his Church, or declared their intention of uniting with it. The throngs that, during the first months of his crusade, had come to hear him preach the new gospel of Christian fellowship, had fallen sadly away. There was now room, and plenty of it, in all the pews, at all the services. The treasury of the church was empty, its obligations were unpaid, many of its institutions were

either dormant or wholly abandoned. He, himself, refusing to accept the bounty of his treasurer, or the charitable offerings of those few among the wealthier of his parishioners who still stood listlessly by him, was facing an ever-increasing burden of personal debt. What was wrong? Had God forsaken him? Had the Son of God repudiated the doctrine laid down in His Holy Scriptures? Had that doctrine been divinely carved into his believing heart in simple mockery? They were indeed disturbing, insidious, sinister thoughts with which he struggled that day.

In the midst of his contemplation Barry Malleson entered. It was evident, even before he spoke, that something had gone wrong with him. He had lost his air of easy self-assurance. He had a troubled look; his eyes were widely open as if in sorrow, at the cause of which he was still wondering. His face was unshaven, his hair was rumpled, his clothes hung loosely on him, and his soft shirt and flowing tie, the like of which he had affected since his conversion to socialism, were soiled and awry.

"Well, Farrar," he said, "it's all up with me. I came over to tell you."

"What's up, Barry?" The rector had already jumped to the conclusion that there had been serious trouble with Mary Bradley. But in that he was wrong.

"I've had a break," replied Barry, "with the president of the company. I have resigned my position as vice-president."

The situation became at once plain to the minister.

"Was your resignation demanded?" he asked.

"You may say so, yes. I have also been ordered to keep away from the office and the plant."

"For what reason?"

"The president doesn't wish to have any socialist on the premises."

"That's absurd! He has a very narrow mind."

"He has a very determined mind when he's once

made it up, and he's made it up all right so far as I am concerned. I have decided also, Farrar, to withdraw from his house and family."

"Why should you do that?"

"He says I may stay there as a matter of grace on his part. But, you know, that's contrary to our creed. We socialists don't believe in charity. What we want is simple justice."

It sounded gruesome and uncanny, coming from Barry's lips, this repetition of a doctrine that the rector himself had spread broadcast. Was this another victim of an unsound creed? The question forced itself in upon the minister's mind with appalling insistence. "But, Barry," he exclaimed, "this is tragic! It is unnecessarily tragic! Does he give you no alternative?"

"Oh, yes. He'll take it all back on certain conditions. You see he's practically disowned and disinherited me now. If I'll do what he wants me to he'll restore me to his favor."

"What does he want you to do?"

"Well, in the first place he wants me to cut out socialism. I can't cut out socialism, Farrar. I believe in it. It's the road to comfort and peace and happiness for the human race."

How trite and hollow the pet phrase sounded in the face of a calamity like this! From whom had he learned it, that he should repeat it, parrot-like, to the confusion of his host? The rector turned sad eyes on his visitor.

"Is that all you are to do, Barry?"

"Oh, no! I've got to repudiate you, and everything you stand for. Can you imagine me doing that, Farrar? Why, I've looked up to you as the biggest and bravest and brainiest man in this city. I'd follow you straight to the bottomless pit, if you said the word."

"Barry! Oh, Barry! Am I leading you to destruction?"

"The president says so. That's where he and I

can't agree. He says I'm just simply your dupe. He says I have no mind of my own. He says I've turned over to you for safe-keeping what little brains I ever had. Now, Farrar, that was going a step too far, and I told him so. I'm no fool. You know that. I've got as much good sense and sound judgment as the next man. And I won't permit any one, not even my own father, to call me a fool. Would you?"

The rector did not answer him. How could he? The situation was too pathetic, too tragic, to permit of either a confirmation or denial of the correctness of the young man's attitude.

But Barry did not wait for a reply. He hurried on:

"And that isn't all, Farrar. He says I've got to throw the widow overboard."

"Mrs. Bradley?"

"Yes, Mrs. Bradley. He says I've got to break with her, lock, stock and barrel. Now, you know, Farrar, I can't do that. I never could do that. It's impossible! Why, I'd as soon think of breaking with God!"

He did not mean to be irreverent. He was simply in dead earnest, and he looked it. But he was also in deep distress, and his distress wrung the heart of the sympathetic and self-accusing rector of Christ Church.

"Barry," he said, "if I am responsible in any way for the misfortunes that have overtaken you—and God knows I may be—I ask your forgiveness from the bottom of my heart."

Barry smiled at that. "Oh, now look here, Farrar," he replied. "I didn't come here to put any blame on you. You've been my friend and counselor, not my enemy—never my enemy."

"Thank you, Barry. Thank you a thousand times! Now tell me what I can do to help you. I would be the basest ingrate on earth if I did not stand by you to the limit of my power."

"Nothing, Farrar, nothing. I don't want help—just companionship."

Quick tears sprang to the rector's eyes, and he went over and laid an affectionate arm about the young man's shoulders.

"You shall have it," he said. "You shall have my heart's best."

The echo of the front-door bell came to Barry's ears from somewhere in the house, and he started up in alarm, and cast an apprehensive glance down the hall through the half-opened door. In the distance he caught sight of a woman's skirts, and heard, indistinctly, her voice in inquiry.

"It's Jane," he whispered. "She's followed me here. She's got me cornered. Farrar, if you really want to do something for me, you've got a chance to do it now."

"What shall I do, Barry?"

"Switch her off the track. I can't meet her to-day. Positively I can't. I—I'm in no condition."

"You don't need to meet her."

"But she'll insist on it. She knows I'm here. Can't —can't you let me out the back way?"

He stood there, a picture of abject fright, and cringing irresolution. He had not been afraid to talk face to face with Richard Malleson, but in the prospect of meeting Jane Chichester he became the veriest coward. The rector led him through the dining-room to the side-door of the rectory, and thence he made his escape to the street.

But it was not, after all, Jane Chichester who had called. When Mr. Farrar returned to the library he found Ruth Tracy there awaiting him.

"Barry was here," he said, "and you gave him a great fright."

"Indeed! How was that?"

"He thought it was Jane Chichester who came in."

"Why should he be frightened at Jane?"

"Oh, I'm not sure but that he has good reason to be. At any rate I helped him to make his escape by the

back door. He would have been quite willing that I should 'let him down by the wall in a basket,' after the manner of Saul's escape from his enemies at Damascus. Barry is somewhat nervous to-day, anyway. He came to tell me that his father has disowned him."

"Because of his conversion to socialism?"

"Yes, and because of his adherence to me and to my cause, and because of his friendly relations with Mrs. Bradley."

"I'm sorry. How does he take it?"

"Like a hero. But, Miss Tracy, I can't get it out of my mind that in some way I am responsible for his misfortunes. Perhaps I should not have encouraged him, perhaps I should not have permitted him, to cast in his lot with us."

"You have no cause for self-accusation on that account, Mr. Farrar. You have set up a standard under which all men, whether wise or foolish, should not hesitate to gather. You cannot discriminate. To do so would be destructive to your cause."

"In these distressing times I have even had doubts concerning the righteousness of my cause."

She looked up at him in alarm. Had the fight been too strenuous for him, the strain too severe? Was he, after all, about to yield? to become just common clay? She, herself, had come to the rectory, despondent and despairing, to obtain new courage and strength from him. The burden of the suffering that she had witnessed during these last terrible weeks was crushing the leaven of optimism out of her heart. Were they both now to go weakly down together to defeat and disaster? A wave of stubborn aggressiveness swept into her soul. She would not permit it. She would not listen to so sinister a suggestion. She would rise in her own strength and save both him and herself.

"You have no right," she declared, "to say that. Why do you harbor such a doubt?"

"Because it seems to me that if God were with me

my church would not be falling into decay. Even the people in whose behalf we have fought are leaving us."

"That is because, in these times, they are too ill-clothed, too hungry, too wretched to come to church. They do not realize that for these very reasons they stand in greater need of the consolation of religion."

"True. But you can't thrust religion down the throat of a man who is perishing from hunger. And the thought that distresses me is that I may have been in some way or to some extent responsible for all this suffering. If I had not preached to the laboring men, as I have, the gospel of discontent with things as they are, it may be that these dreadful days would not have come."

He rose from his chair and began pacing up and down the room. She saw that he was in distress, and that if she would help him she must refute his argument.

"You have simply preached God's truth to them," she declared. "If they have profited by it to seek to better their condition, that fact redounds to your credit. It is those who oppress them who are responsible for this frightful situation; it is not you, nor your teachings, nor because the men have followed you."

He was still walking rapidly up and down the room.

"But, Miss Tracy," he asked, "if I am right why are not the men of my parish with me? If they were with me to-day, if we were acting as one, Christ Church would be a power in the alleviation of distress. As it is we are almost helpless."

At that her anger rose. She had not been able to forgive the men who were permitting Christ Church and its charities to go to wreck in a time like this, because of their resentment toward the rector.

"They are not with you because their hearts are evil," she declared. "Because they have no conception of the real meaning of Christ's religion. They are not Christians. They are scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! I detest them!"

He stopped in his walk and looked down on her. Her cheeks were blazing. Her eyes were flashing with indignation. It was plain that her patience with the men who had hampered and hindered the rector of Christ Church in his work of saving the bodies and souls of the poor was exhausted.

"Thank you!" he said. "That was not pious, but it was most comforting."

He went and sat down opposite to her at the library table on which her hands were lying as she faced him.

"And you have been my comfort," he added, "through all these dreadful weeks."

"I am glad," she replied, "that I could be of service to you." But the aggressive note in her voice was gone, and her eyes were turned from him.

He reached over and took her hands, one in each of his.

"You have been my mainstay," he said. "I could not have done my work without you. I could not have lived through it without you."

Extravagant, unwise, impulsive, he did not realize the depth of the meaning of his words. But she did. Her eyes met his and fell. Her cheeks paled. Her hands lay limp in his. It was but a moment. Some gentlemanly instinct moved him, some high-born spirit of *noblesse oblige*, some God-given sense of what a pure-hearted man owes to himself. He released her hands and rose from his chair.

"I must leave you," he said, "and go to the workmen's meeting at Carpenter's Hall. It is already past time." And he added: "Will you not wait and see Mrs. Farrar? You can help her. She is very despondent and wretched. Give her some cheering thought. I will ask her to come in."

He left the room, and in it he left his visitor alone.

Five minutes is not a long time within which to grasp one's soul and draw it back from the brink of disaster. But Ruth Tracy had always been quick and

courageous in meeting emergencies, and she was quick and courageous to-day. It was at the end of this five minutes that Mrs. Farrar entered the library. One who had known her six months before would hardly have recognized her now. Worn with her household tasks, harassed by the troubles of the time, sick at heart to the verge of prostration, she looked it all. Her face was gray, her cheeks were sunken, her lips were colorless, deep shadows rested under her eyes inflamed by much weeping.

"Mr. Farrar told me," she said, "that you wished to see me."

"Only to say to you," replied Ruth, remembering her instructions, "that better times are coming; that the clouds will soon roll by."

"You only say that to try to comfort me," was the response. "You do not really believe it in your heart."

"But things cannot go on this way forever, Mrs. Farrar. Even if the climax has not yet been reached it must come soon. April is almost here, and warmer weather. Under sunny skies the men will find more work to do; there will be less suffering in their families."

"I am not thinking about the men and their families, Miss Tracy. I am thinking about myself, and my children, and Mr. Farrar."

"I know. It has been dreadful. But you have been very patient. And Mr. Farrar has been a hero. And things are going to be better."

"No, I haven't been patient. I haven't reconciled myself to the situation at all. I have been placed in a most cruel position. I suppose Mr. Farrar is right. I know he must be right, because he is a good man. But if only it could have been done without making me suffer so!"

She put her handkerchief to her eyes to dry the ready tears. Tears had come so freely and so frequently in these last days.

Ruth, moved with deep pity, crossed the room, and sat by her, and took her hand in both of her own.

"I am so sorry for you," she said; "so sorry. But you know Mr. Farrar could not have done otherwise than he has done without belittling his calling as a minister. And you, as his wife, must try to forget yourself and your troubles, and help and comfort and encourage him."

"I can't, Miss Tracy. It's impossible. I lack both the strength and the ability. I haven't what he calls 'the vision.' I haven't any of the qualities that fit a woman to be a minister's wife, and he knows it, and he has told me so."

"Mrs. Farrar, you must be mistaken. Surely he would not ——"

"No, I am not mistaken. It's all true. He knows I am utterly incapable, and he treats me accordingly. He never consults me about his work or his plans. He doesn't even mention them to me any more. I don't blame him. He knows it would be useless. I can't understand them, and I can't understand him nor sympathize with any of his views. I'm only a drag on him —a burden. It would be so much better if I were entirely out of his way."

"Mrs. Farrar! You must not talk so."

"But it's true. And I shall be out of his way. I can't endure a life like this. I shall die. I hope, for his sake, that I shall die soon. Then he will be free to marry one who will understand him, and sympathize with him, and be a companion to him as well as a wife."

"Mrs. Farrar! You are beside yourself. You have brooded too much over your troubles. You have been left too much alone. You must come oftener to see me, and I will come oftener to the rectory."

"Yes. That will please Mr. Farrar. He depends so much upon you. You are his mainstay. He could not have done his work without you. I doubt if he could have lived through all this without you, Miss Tracy."

This echo of the rector's words fell upon the girl's brain like hammer blows on an anvil. She felt herself growing weak, unsteady, at a loss how to reply. With a great effort she pulled herself together, and at last she said, unconscious echo of her own words spoken to the rector:

"I am glad to have been of service to Mr. Farrar." Then, gathering still greater self-control, she added: "But now I want to do even more for you, because I feel that yours is the greater need."

And the woman replied:

"The greatest service you can do for me is to be good to my children after I am gone."

"But, Mrs. Farrar, you are not going to die. It—it's absurd!"

"Oh, yes. I am going to die. I've thought it all out. I'm going to die, and you are going to marry Mr. Farrar."

"Mrs. Farrar!"

The girl sprang to her feet and put her hands before her eyes, shocked at this full revelation of the other woman's mind.

The minister's wife went on mechanically:

"Oh, I don't charge you with having planned it in advance. You are too good to do that, and he is too loyal to me. But you are going to marry him, nevertheless, and it will be an ideal marriage. You will make him a perfect wife——"

"Mrs. Farrar, stop! You must not say such things! You are wild!"

Ruth's face was scarlet, and her eyes were wide with horror. But Mrs. Farrar would not stop.

"You will make him a perfect wife," she repeated. "You are in such close accord. He will be very fond of you, and you will both be very happy; very happy!"

"Stop! I'll not listen to you!" The girl put both hands to her ears and backed away. "I'll not listen to you," she repeated. "I'll not stay!"

Mrs. Farrar rose from her chair and followed her guest toward the door.

"There's only one thing I want to ask of you besides being good to my children after I am gone, and that is that you will not take Mr. Farrar's love away from me during the little while that I shall live." She held out her hands imploringly, and her voice rose in a passion of entreaty: "If you only knew how I have loved him, and what he has been to me, and how I want him for just this little while ——"

But her guest had gone. Shocked, humiliated, terrified, she had turned her back to the beseeching woman, and had fled through the hall, out at the door, and down the steps to the walk and to the street. She pulled close the thick veil that had shielded her face from the March wind, so that it might also shield it from the gaze of the people whom she should meet, and hurried, with ever-increasing consternation, toward her home.

What had happened? What had she done? Of what had she been guilty? Whose fault was it that this dreadful thing had come to pass? Vivid, soul-searching questions and thoughts tumbled tumultuously through her brain. Memories of the last half year came flooding back into her mind. Talks, confidences, sympathies, greetings and farewells, the touch of his hands on hers that day, the look in his eyes, in her own heart the emotion that she could not, and dared not attempt to define. And the wider her thought went, the more deeply she searched herself, the redder grew the blush of shame upon her cheeks, the more intolerable became her burden of humiliation. And always, in her mental vision, stood that distracted woman, with the gray face and beseeching eyes, and white lips moving with words that no wife should have spoken, and no other woman should have heard.

At the foot of the broad street that leads up to Fountain Park she met Philip Westgate. She would have passed him by, but he blocked her path.

"I have just come from your home," he said. "There is something I want to tell you. May I walk back there with you?"

"I can't see you to-day," she replied. "I am too tired to talk, or to listen."

"It will take but a minute. It is important."

"Then tell it to me here."

But she did not stop. She walked on and he walked with her.

"I have no right to interfere," he said, "save the right that any man has to try to prevent disaster to a friend."

"I understand. Go on. What is it you wish to say to me?"

"This—that you are wearing yourself out, body and mind, in a cause that is utterly unworthy of you. The sacrifice is not only deplorable, it is useless."

"You have told me that before. But I have been doing God's work among the poor, Philip, while you and those who believe as you do have hindered and crippled and made almost useless what might have been the most powerful instrumentality in the city for their relief."

He did not resent her criticism, nor did he make any effort to defend himself. His thought was only of her.

"I am not chiding you," he said, "for what you have done in the name of charity. You have been a good angel to those in distress. In everything—I say in everything—you have acted from the noblest of motives, with the purest of hearts."

"I have, Philip. Oh, I have! Believe me—in everything."

In her eagerness she stopped and turned toward him, and, beneath the thickness of her veil, he saw, by her face, that she was under the stress of some great emotion.

"Beyond the shadow of a doubt," he replied, as they walked on. "But you have been unwise; misguided.

You have thrown in your fortunes with an impractical zealot, and he has led you into dangerous paths. I want to rescue you. That is my mission to you today."

"To rescue me? From what?"

"From the disaster that is bound very soon to overtake the rector of Christ Church and all his visionary schemes. From the gossip of evil-minded persons who have linked your name with his."

"Philip!"

"Forgive me! I had to say it. There was no one else to tell you."

"Philip! Have you believed it of me?"

"No, dear, no." He dropped into the old, affectionate way of speaking to her, but she did not dream of chiding him. "You have been absolutely blameless," he continued. "I have already told you so. But it is time now for you to stop and count the cost. I do not ask you to do it for my sake. I ask you to do it for your own; for the sake of your father who grieves over you; for the sake of your mother who is almost distracted."

She did not answer his appeal; perhaps she did not hear it; but she questioned him again:

"Philip, do you charge Mr. Farrar with any evil thought or motive?"

Even as she spoke her cheeks were reddened anew from the memories of the hour just passed.

"I am here to save you," he replied, "not to condemn him."

"But I want an answer. Has he been guilty of anything, within your knowledge, unbecoming a minister and a gentleman?"

"I am not here to smirch his reputation."

"What is it that he has done?"

"I do not care to tell you."

"That is cowardly, Philip. I have a right to know. If your solicitude for me is genuine you will tell me.

If this man has been evil either in heart or conduct I must know it."

The hour of Westgate's temptation had come. Against her peremptory demand, against his own fierce desire to justify himself in the eyes of the woman whom he loved, arose the gentleman's instinct to speak no evil of another, to hold sacred the knowledge with which the rector had frankly intrusted him. And yet—could any time be more opportune, could any occasion be more appropriate than this to smash the idol which this woman had been worshiping to her own destruction? He looked into her eyes and was silent. They had reached the foot of the steps leading up to her door. She turned, grasped an ornament carved into the stone of the newel-post and faced him insistently.

"Philip! Speak to me. Tell me what you know."

"I will not tell you, Ruth."

"Why not?"

"Because I respect myself, and I love you."

"You love me, and yet you come to me with the defaming gossip of the town, and when I ask you for facts that I may defend myself, you will not give them to me. You have entered into a conspiracy with him and his wife to wreck my peace of mind, and I shall end by hating all three of you."

She swept up the steps to her door; but when she reached it, some sudden wave of contrition, some dim realization of his manly self-restraint, entered her heart, and she turned and called him back, for he had already started away. She hurried down to meet him, and held out her hand, and he grasped it in both of his.

"Philip," she said, "forgive me! Such dreadful things have happened to-day that I am beside myself. Do not remember what I have said. Remember only that I—am grateful—to you."

Through the thick folds of her veil he saw that her eyes were filled with tears. He lifted her hand to his

lips and, unabashed by the light of day or the peopled street, he kissed it. She made no sign of disapproval, but she drew her hand slowly from his grasp, turned again, ran up the steps, entered at her door and closed it, and left him standing, thrilled and amazed, in the center of the walk.

CHAPTER XIX

THE STORM BREAKS

THE meeting to which the rector of Christ Church went from his interview with Ruth Tracy was a meeting of the Malleson Manufacturing Company's striking workmen. It had been called by the strike committee for the purpose of submitting to the men the question of the advisability of calling off the strike. Many of the workers were in favor of an immediate and unconditional surrender. They felt that the limit of suffering had been reached, and that the only hope of relief lay in a complete abandonment of the fight, now, before new men should be taken into the works, and the bad blood aroused thereby should lead to disorder, and the permanent disbarment of the old men from the company's employ. For, notwithstanding Richard Malleson's declaration that he would not take any of them back no matter how they came, each one of them felt that the president might listen to his individual appeal.

On the other hand there were those who believed that the threatened opening of the plant with imported strike-breakers was but a bluff put forth to break their ranks and to force them into submission, and that, if they could hold out for ten days more, the strike would be won. As for imported labor, if it came it would be given short shrift. Scabs were always cowards, and a proper show of determination on the part of the men would soon send the rats scurrying to their holes. Besides, Richard Malleson needed the old men as much as they needed him. He was on the point of financial

disaster, and his only salvation was to take back all of his employees on their own terms.

The differences between the two wings of the strikers were sharp and serious. The clash of ideas was grave and threatening. At the head of those who were in favor of yielding was Lamar. Indeed it was he who had skilfully worked up so powerful a sentiment for surrender. Leading the opposition was Bricky Hoover, the one hero of the strike, who, by crude logic and individual appeal, was still holding the minority in line.

All day the battle of opinion had raged. Bad blood had been aroused. Quarrels were frequent. In some cases blows had been exchanged.

It was, therefore, an excited and an impatient crowd that gathered that afternoon in front of Carpenters' Hall as the hour for the meeting drew near. Wild rumors filled the air. Mr. Malleson had agreed to take them all back. Mr. Malleson had sworn that not one of them would ever again be permitted to enter his mills. Evictions were to begin at once. Their leaders had sold them out. Three hundred strike-breakers were already inside the plant; more were on the way. If any force was used on the new men the guards and deputies had been instructed to shoot to kill. These, and a hundred other stories, false and true, floated constantly back and forth through the moving and gesticulating crowd.

It was well that the crowd kept moving, and gesticulating too for that matter, for the late March day had brought keen winds and flurries of snow, and comfort was not to be had by standing motionless in the street.

It was past the hour for the meeting, and the doors of the hall had not yet been opened. That was inexcusable. The men demanded that they be permitted to enter in order that they might at least keep warm. They struggled with each other for places near the steps. Then word came that the proprietor of the hall

had refused them entrance. One said that it was because the rent had not been paid in advance. Another said that the owners of the property were afraid there would be violence in the meeting, and the destruction of furniture. Still another called attention to the fact that the building was owned by Mr. Hughes and Colonel Boston, both of whom were directors of the Malleson Manufacturing Company. At this a few of the hot-headed ones were for smashing in the doors and taking possession anyway. It was a crime, they said, for any one to keep them standing in the street on a day like this. What unwise counsels might have prevailed will never be known, for, suddenly, a strong and penetrating voice rang out above the tumult. It was the voice of the rector of Christ Church. He was standing on the steps leading to the entrance door, and was inviting them to hold their meeting in the parish hall of his church, only five blocks away. He had learned of their predicament, had taken pity on them, and, moved by a generous impulse, was offering them shelter under a roof which truly had never covered such an audience as this. He bade them follow him. Some of them did so gladly, applauding his generosity as they went. Others fell into line sullenly and hesitatingly, seeing in the invitation only a bid, on the part of the Church, for the favor of the laboring masses. A few refused to go at all; declaring that they would perish rather than hold their meeting under the auspices or by grace of a Church the very shadow of whose spire was hateful to them. But, for the most part, they went along. A sense of decorum fell upon them as they entered the doors of the parish hall. They removed their caps, took their seats quietly, and awaited the presentation of the issues which they were to decide.

The meeting was called to order by the president of their local union who stated briefly the purpose of the gathering, and then called for the report of the committee that had last visited the president of the Malle-

son Manufacturing Company. There was little in the report that was new to the men. Mr. Malleson had refused to open his mills to his former employees, on any terms, whether they came singly or in a body. He would not treat with them on any questions or under any conditions. He had said that they were dupes and fools to listen to the counsel of designing and self-seeking leaders who had nothing to lose and everything to gain by prolonging the strike. Finally, he had practically ordered the members of the committee from his room, and had warned them not to intrude again upon his privacy with their childish demands nor with their terms of surrender.

At the conclusion of the report there were mutterings and hisses, and not a few bitter denunciations of the president and his policy, and these denunciations were not entirely unaccompanied by threats.

A resolution was offered to the effect that the strike be declared off, and that the union officials and the officers of the company be notified at once of the action. The motion to adopt the resolution was duly seconded, and then the contention began anew. There were strong and passionate arguments both for and against the prolongation of the strike. Men with haggard faces told of the suffering that they and their families had endured, and begged that they might be permitted, without infraction of the union rules, and without the ignominy of being hailed and treated as scabs, to seek their old jobs. Others arose and appealed to their fellow-workmen, declaring that while they too had suffered, they were nevertheless ready to die in the last ditch in order that the dignity of labor might be maintained, and their rights as human beings upheld. It was crude oratory, but it had its effect. The tide of sentiment swung away from those who would bring the strike to a speedy end by surrender, and turned strongly toward those who would prolong it for the general and ultimate good.

Stephen Lamar, walking delegate, sitting up in a far corner of the hall, surrounded by his personal adherents, watching the proceedings with anxious eyes, was quick to note the dangerous tendency that the meeting was taking on. He knew that he must at once fling himself and his personality into the controversy in order to stem the tide that was setting so strongly toward complete disaster. He had not cared to speak. He had not hitherto considered it necessary that he should do so. The situation had seemed to be firmly enough in his grasp. But now he felt that it was imperative that he should take the floor, else everything would be lost; and how would he ever again face Mary Bradley?

When he arose there were hoarse shouts of welcome, and cries of "To the platform, Steve!" So he mounted the platform and began to speak. He reminded his hearers of the years of devoted service he had given to the cause of labor.

Some one in the audience cried out:

"Ye've been well paid for it, too."

He did not heed the interruption, but went on to tell of the superhuman efforts he had put forth to make this strike a success.

"I have done all that mortal man could do," he shouted, "to help you win your fight, and to relieve your distress. I have suffered with you."

"The hell you have!"

It was the same voice that had interrupted before, and again the speaker disregarded it, and went vigorously on. He could not afford, in this emergency, to get into a controversy with some obscure workman on the floor.

"I know all there is to know about this strike," he declared. "And I know Richard Malleson and his board. Believe me, men, they are putting up no bluff. They mean what they say. They are determined to crush us. We are already beaten. The only thing left

for us to do is to acknowledge our defeat, call off the strike, and give these starving men a chance to get honorably back to work."

Then came a new interruption from another source. Some one, back among the shadows, shouted in a shrill voice:

"How much do you get for sellin' of us out?"

There were shouts and laughter, and then a roar of disapproval. Lamar was angry. He could not brook that insult. It struck too near home. He turned his face in the direction from which the voice had come.

"I don't know who you are," he cried, "but I do know that you're a cowardly liar!"

In the dark corner confusion reigned. The man with the shrill voice wanted to fight. Some of his fellows were willing to back him; others sought to restrain him. An edifying spectacle, indeed, in a house dedicated to the promotion of the gospel of the Prince of Peace. The chairman of the meeting pounded for order so vigorously that quiet was finally restored and Lamar went on with his speech.

"If you vote down this resolution," he said, "you will compel honest men to become scabs. They can't continue to face freezing wives and starving children at your behest. They will seek their old jobs on the best terms they can get, and I shall not blame them. I do not know what will happen when the strike is declared off; I can promise you nothing. But I do know that Richard Malleson cannot successfully run his mills without the aid of his old men. If you prolong this strike you will doubtless wreck the Malleson Company, but you yourselves will be crushed at the bottom of the wreck. I beg of you to make the best of a bad bargain, to use judgment, to take pity on your loved ones, to behave yourselves like reasonable men, to cry quits, and go to work."

There had been no more interruptions, but, mingled with the applause that followed Lamar to his seat,

there were shouts of disapproval, and mutterings of anger. Some one, by way of excuse for him, declared that Steve had broken down, and lost his nerve. No one had ever before known him to acknowledge defeat. Persistence had been the secret of his success. But, doubtless, this time he was right.

Bricky Hoover sat in the front row of seats, his body bent forward, his head resting in his hands, his eyes fixed steadfastly on a certain spot on the floor in front of him. No one had called on him for a speech, for no one had conceived that he was capable of making one. He was a worker, not an orator. But the shouting that followed Lamar's address had not yet died down when he rose to his feet and began to mount the steps that led to the platform. He bobbed his head to the chairman, and then turned and faced his audience. When his fellow-workers saw him standing there, rubbing his hand awkwardly across his unkempt shock of red hair, they burst into laughter. Apparently the strain under which they were laboring was to be eased by a bit of comedy. He stood there with his long legs wide apart, his shoulders hunched up, his unsymmetrical face drawn into a queer, forced smile. Some one said that he had been drinking, and had best sit down. But others hailed him familiarly and shouted for a speech. He was there to speak, and he began.

There were few who heard him at first; his voice was low, and he seemed to have difficulty in articulating his words. But cries of: "Louder!" "Louder!" brought more vigor to his throat and tongue, and soon the only ones who failed to hear him were those who would not do so.

"I've been the goat," he said, "for both sides in this thing. I'm through bein' the goat. I'm goin' to fight, now, on me own account. The Company picked me for the first victim because I'd been the loudest gittin' yer rights for ye. More was to follow. If ye hadn't struck they'd 'a' been a hunderd o' ye laid off

by to-day. They was goin' to pick ye out like cullin's, an' toss ye to the scrap-heap."

"Right you are, Bricky," came a voice from the audience.

"Right I am it is. Ye didn't strike for me when it comes to that; ye struck for your own jobs. Ye could 'a' counted me out any day. Ye knew that. I told ye so. I wouldn't stand in the way o' one o' ye. I'd 'a' left the town; I'd 'a' left the country; I'd 'a' gone an' hung meself to 'a' got one man's job back for 'im."

"Good boy, Bricky!"

"Ye knew that, didn't ye? But ye stood out like men, an' they've starved ye like rats. They couldn't 'a' treated dogs no worse 'an they've treated you. I went with the comity to see the old man. I promised everything. I crawled on me belly to 'im, an'—ye heard the report—he kicked us all out."

"We'll get him yet!" came a cry from the benches.

"Ye will if ye'll listen to me. They say call the strike off an' git out. Men, ye can't git out that way. It's death to ye if ye try it. Maybe it's death anyway, I don't know; but if it is I'll die a-fightin'."

"So will I!" "And I!" "And I!"

"That's right! If ye fight, an' fight like hell, ye'll win. I know. They can't run their mills with scabs. You won't let 'em run their mills with scabs. I'll smash the head o' the first scab that takes my job. It ain't his job; it's mine. I've got a right to it. Them jobs down there are yours. Them machines down there are yours. You earned the money that bought 'em. You've got a right to run 'em, an' if ye do what I tell ye, ye will run 'em. The man that lays down now an' lets Dick Malleson tread on 'is neck is a damned fool!"

"That's right, Bricky! Go for 'em! Give 'em hell!"

The passions of the crowd, swayed by Bricky's rude eloquence, were being roused to the fighting pitch.

"Yes," he went on, swinging his long arms, and opening and closing his big fists; "an' do ye know what's happenin' to-day? A car-load o' scabs has been switched into the mill-yard. I got the word when I come in. By six o'clock one of 'em will have your machine, Bill Souder, and one of 'em will have yours, Abe Slinsky, and one of 'em will have yours, and yours, and yours," pointing his forefinger in rapid succession at the men who sat in front of him. His voice rose to a piercing height:

"Will ye let 'em keep 'em?"

"No!" came the answer from two hundred throats. "No!" "We'll club 'em out! We'll kill 'em!"

Men were on their feet, shouting, gesticulating, demanding, swearing. Bricky's voice rose again, high above the clamor.

"I don't know what you're goin' to do about it, men; but I know what I'm goin' to do. I'm goin' down, now, to see Dick Malleson. I ain't goin' to beg 'im for my job; I'm goin' to demand it, and if he don't give it to me, by God! I'll take it! And if ye'll go along ye'll have them millionaries on their knees in an hour's time, a-beggin' for mercy. Who goes?"

"We all go! We're fightin' strong, an' we're fightin' mad, an' we'll have our rights. Come on!"

There was a rush for the hall doors. The sound of the chairman's gavel was lost in the din. The pending resolution and its fate were forgotten. Men fought with each other in their eagerness to get to the street and to take up the line of march to the mills. Chairs were overturned. Doors were wrenched from their hinges. Prayer-books and hymnals and lesson-leaves were scattered on the floor and trampled under shuffling feet. Lamar, red-faced, shouting, gesticulating, tried to stem the torrent, but he might as well have tried to hold back Niagara. Some laughed at him, others cursed him, no one obeyed him.

The rector of Christ Church, standing in a niche by

the organ, had looked on and listened in horrified amazement. He saw that the hour for riot and bloodshed had arrived, and he made one supreme effort to avert the final catastrophe. He sprang to the platform and shouted to the mob. Men turned to see who it was that was speaking, and then turned away. They did not care to hear him. They paid no more attention to him than if he had been a man of straw, except that some of them laughed at him, some mocked him, some ridiculed him. His appeal for wisdom and order fell on deaf ears. These men had no use, to-day, for sermons or religion, or pious advice. What they wanted was action—and plenty of it.

When he found that his effort was utterly useless, the rector stopped speaking and came down from the platform. At the foot of the steps he met Lamar, gazing, with frightened eyes, at the disappearing crowd.

"Lamar," he cried, "stop them! They're wild! They're rushing to destruction!"

"I can't," replied Lamar. "No man can stop them. God in heaven couldn't stop them now!"

From Lamar's lips the ejaculation was impious, but the clergyman did not stop to consider it.

"Then come with me," he said. "Let's follow on and do what we may to prevent bloodshed and arson."

Lamar made no reply, but he started on in obedience to the request. So they went on their hopeless mission, servant of Christ and enemy of God together, both rejected by those whom they had served, hissed and hooted at as they made their way through crowded streets black with the breaking storm.

The march of the workmen themselves was not without the semblance of order. But idle men on every corner joined them, vicious men, whose only occupation it was to prey upon society, fell into their ranks; hoodlums and hotheads, shouting their enthusiasm, went joyously along; the curious and sensation loving followed on behind in scores; even women and children

mingled with the crowd that was headed ominously toward the mills.

Forerunners hurried back to say that a company of scabs had entered the mill-yard, guarded by deputies armed to the teeth. The mob howled its defiance and derision, and pushed on.

The entrance to the Malleson mills was at the foot of a narrow street. In front of the works a broad plaza ran, blocked at both ends by buildings of the company. Along this street and across this plaza the army of employees, in working times, made their way to and from their place of employment. It was down this street now that the crowd swept, bent on presenting and enforcing their demand for work. But just above where the way opens into the plaza, stretched from wall to wall, two ranks of policemen stood, shoulder to shoulder, club in hand, ready to repel any invasion of the property of the rich. The leaders of the mob, scarcely able to resist the pressure from behind, halted when they reached the line of blue.

"What do you want?" inquired the captain of police.

"We want to see Richard Malleson," was the reply.

"You can't see him."

"We want our jobs."

"You can't go to the mills."

"We want to drive out the scabs."

"The first man that attempts to cross this line will go home with a cracked skull."

The mob howled with disappointment and rage. Who said the police were not the paid and servient tools of capital? Whoever said so lied!

Struggling, pushing, shouldering their way through the hostile crowd, the rector of Christ Church and Stephen Lamar got inch by inch toward the front. On the way down they had agreed to make one final appeal to Richard Malleson for peace. He alone could stay the red hand of riot. It was not believable that he would refuse.

The captain of police recognized them, and when he knew what their errand was he permitted them to pass the lines. They started across the open plaza toward the front of the main building.

"You're going where you belong!" came the cry from those in the mob who saw them go. "You've sold us out, and you're going for your pay!" "Traitors!" "Blacklegs!"

All reason and judgment, all power to discriminate, seemed lost and swallowed up in the overwhelming passion of revolt that had seized upon the riotous crowd.

Two guards stood at the top of the steps, one at each side of the office door.

"We want to see Mr. Malleson," said the rector.

"You can't see him," was the reply. "No one is allowed to go in."

"But we must talk with him at once; it's a matter of life and death."

The man looked at him for a moment, and then turned and entered the building. He came back presently to say that Mr. Farrar might go in, but that Lamar would not be admitted under any conditions. So the labor leader went down the steps and stood by the railing outside, while the rector passed in to the office of the company. Mr. Malleson was there with his counsel, Philip Westgate, a half dozen anxious members of his board of directors, and a few frightened clerks. He looked up as the rector entered.

"Well," he asked bluntly, "what is your errand to-day?"

"I have come," said the rector, "to try to avert bloodshed."

"And you have brought with you the club and torch with which you threatened me."

"Mr. Malleson, this is no time for caviling. Do you see the mob in that street? It's only a question of minutes when the police barrier will be broken down,

and these furious men will be at your door. There is but one way to avoid riot and arson and bloodshed. You must face these men and promise to open your mills to them. It is your last expedient."

The president of the company brought his clenched hand down onto the table with a bang.

"Is this your only errand?" he asked.

"It is."

"Then go back and tell the thugs and hoodlums who sent you here that Richard Malleson has never yet surrendered to a mob, and that he never will. Tell them, moreover, that I have armed men behind my walls, and that the first rioter who attempts to enter here will take his life in his hands."

"But, Mr. Malleson, that would be murder. These men have lost their heads. They don't know what they are doing. They are wild. One word from you would restore their reason and prevent a tragedy."

"I have said my last word."

Some one, looking from the window, exclaimed in fright:

"They've broken the police lines! They're swarming into the plaza!"

It was true. The pressure of the mob had broken down the police guard, and enraged men by the hundreds were pouring into the open space that faced the factory. They were rattling at the doors of the mill, hammering against the gates, demanding to be let in. Hoodlums were yelling; women were screaming; fists were beating the air.

"Break down the door!" was the cry. "Smash the gates!" "Burn the mill!" "Kill the scabs!"

Richard Malleson, standing there with white face and set jaws, had seen them come. So had the rector of Christ Church. Both of them had heard the riotous and savage shouts. In the breast of the capitalist only fierce wrath was roused; but in the breast of the minister anger was mingled with pity.

"I can do nothing here," he said. "I may still be able to do something out there."

He turned to go, but Westgate laid a hand on his arm.

"You had better stay here," he said, "where you will be comparatively safe. It's a wild mess outside. Bricks and bullets are likely to fly soon."

"No matter! My place is with the men. They may listen to me yet."

"They won't listen to any one till they get their fill of blood."

But he went out. He pushed his way down the steps that led from the office door to the sidewalk, down into the midst of pandemonium. A wild-eyed man at his elbow yelled:

"Death to the scabs! Set fire to the buildings, an' smoke 'em all out!"

Near by a single policeman was battling with a dozen frenzied rioters. They had struck his cap from his head and were trying to wrest his club from his hands.

"Don't play with 'im!" shouted one; "choke 'im!"

The white face of the president of the company, distorted with anger, appeared for a moment at an office window.

"There's Dick Malleson!" was the cry. "He starves women an' kills babies! Get a rope an' hang 'im!"

Each wild and murderous sentiment was received with roars of approval by the bloodthirsty mob. The rector of Christ Church, amazed and indignant at the spirit of brutal savagery displayed by the men whose cause he had hitherto championed, determined to speak to them. He fought his way back up the steps to the office door, threw his hat from him, and faced the riotous multitude.

"Men," he shouted, "listen to me!"

"Listen to the preacher!" yelled a man at his side.

"Damn the preacher!" cried another. "He's a traitor and a blackleg!"

"You lie!" was the quick response; "and that proves it."

The man who had cursed the preacher doubled up and sank to the pavement under a blow from the other man's fist. It was the swift and natural result of the controversy, for the spirit of violence was abroad. In the lull that followed the punishment the rector again lifted his voice.

"Men, you are crazy. You are taking a fool's revenge. You are playing into the hands of your enemies. Stop this ungodly riot and go to your homes before blood is spilt!"

As if in defiance of his command, a brick went crashing through the office window at his side, and a cry, either of pain or fear, came from within the room. His heart grew hot with indignation.

"That was a coward's deed!" he shouted. "Shame on the one who did it!"

Already other bricks, torn from a foundation newly laid, were flying through the air. The sound of crashing glass was heard from every quarter. Policemen, back to back, were battling furiously with the mob.

"Pull the preacher down!" yelled a man from the street. "He's no business here!"

"Aye! Pull him down!" came the answering cry from a dozen throats. "He's the tool of capital, and an enemy to labor!"

But the minister was not dismayed. His voice rang out like the wrathful blare of a trumpet:

"I will speak, and you must listen. In God's name, men, are you mad? You'll have blood on your heads ——"

"Aye! and if this brick-bat goes straight you'll have blood on yours!"

The speaker, standing in the street, took rough aim and hurled his missile. It found its mark. The rector

of Christ Church tottered and fell, and those who stood near to him saw blood gush from his temple and go streaming down his face. A woman screamed, and fought her way to him as he lay sprawled along the steps. It was Mary Bradley. She flung herself down at his side. She lifted his shoulders into her lap, and held his head against her breast, and strove to staunch the blood that was pouring from his wound. She turned her blazing eyes on the crowd below her, a crowd that had grown suddenly silent as it saw the result of its first tragic blow.

"Villains!" she screamed. "Murderers! You have killed the only man on earth who cared a pin for your black souls!—the only man whose love I ever craved."

Her cry ended in a wail. She laid her face against the pallid and blood-streaked face that rested on her bosom, and sought to find in it some sign of life. The guards unlocked the office door and carried the limp body of the minister within, taking with them, perforce, the woman who would not let go her hold. But, once inside, they tore her away, and thrust her from them, like a thing unclean.

Hitherto the police, in obedience to orders, had endeavored to hold the rioters in check without the shedding of blood. But now, shocked and angered at the brutal assault on the rector, and taking advantage of the temporary lull occasioned by it, they charged into the mob. Firmly, furiously, with the strength of twice their number, they drove the rabble back. There was savage resistance. There were broken heads. There were bullets that went wild. Bleeding men lay prone on the pavement. Then came a relief squad, hammering its way in; and from each blind end of the plaza the rioters were forced to the center, and up the narrow street toward the city. Enraged, sullen, bleeding, carrying helpless comrades along, they were scattered and driven in helpless confusion to their haunts and homes.

CHAPTER XX

"BLACK AS THE PIT"

It was Friday afternoon that the riot took place. It was now Sunday morning, and the first day of April. The sun was shining gloriously. Birds were chirping in the bare trees. The first springing green was giving life to the rectory lawn. But the rector of Christ Church, looking out from his window toward the street, neither saw nor heard these signs of the wakening season. The sound of the tolling church bell struck upon his ears. He knew that the hour for morning service was approaching, but the knowledge gave him little concern. His children were playing in the hall. He paid no heed to them. It was not that he was ill in body, but that he was sick in soul. His wound had been severe, but it had not placed his life in jeopardy. A glancing blow from a flying brick that had crashed through the glass panel of the door behind him had first laid his scalp open to the bone. He was still weak from the shock of the blow and from loss of blood. But prompt and skilful surgical attention, and a robust constitution, were bringing him rapidly back into his customary form. It was not the result of the violent and brutal assault upon his body from which he was suffering to-day; it was rather the awakening knowledge of what that assault implied. The toilers for whose sake he had dared the displeasure of the powerful, the oppressed for whom he had pleaded and fought, the poverty-stricken whose sufferings he had relieved with his own hands and out of his own pittance, had repudiated and repulsed him, and finally had stoned him. Could ingratitude reach greater depths? Had

a bitterer cup than this ever been held to the lips of any minister of that Christ who alone had felt the extreme bitterness of ingratitude?

And yet he scarcely knew the half of what these toilers thought of him to-day. He had no conception of the strong resentment—resentment without cause that burned in their hearts against him. He had preached fairly enough indeed; but what had he actually done for them? He had declaimed against the power of capital, but capital had not loosened its grip on them by so much as the breadth of a hair. He had been charitable to them, oh, yes! and had visited their sick with pious consolation, and had lured them into unwitting friendship for him and his church, and had opened his parish hall to them on a March day, and what had been the purpose of it all? Only that he might betray them, at the last, into the hands of those tyrannical masters who had hired him, and whom they had repudiated once and for all. For had he not, when the hour came to strike the final blow for victory, thrown himself across their path, besought them to surrender to their oppressors, and when they would not, called them to their faces fools and cowards and murderers? One brick against his pious skull? He should have had a thousand. Curses on him and his sinister religion with its meaningless sop to socialism, and its cloven hoof hidden under its clerical robes!

Ah! but the denunciation of the poor was as nothing to the condemnation of the rich. By the teaching of his social heresies he had led the ignorant and the thoughtless into an attitude toward society that was bound to result in violence and bloodshed, as it had resulted. He had disgraced the religion he was supposed to preach. He had degraded his Church, and debased his high calling. He had opened their sacred buildings to a profane and howling crowd. The walls of their parish hall had echoed with incendiary speeches, with appeals to the worst passions of the heart, with

jeers and curses and the crack and crash of churchly furniture. And out from the doors of this profanated house had issued a riotous and bloodthirsty mob, bent on destroying the property if not the lives of some of the most law-abiding and God-fearing citizens of the city or the state. What degradation! What unheard of sacrilege!

And in the midst and at the height of this disgraceful riot which he had done so much to precipitate, what a spectacle this discredited priest had made of himself! Alternately appealing to and denouncing the reckless mob that surrounded him, he had aroused only their scorn and resentment, until one of them, more daring than his companions, had felled the offending minister with a common brick. Disgusting enough, indeed! But that was not the worst of it; oh, by no means! For, as he lay sprawling and unconscious on the steps, surrounded by rioters and ruffians, had not a woman of the lower class, a socialist, an anarchist, an atheist, a consorter with desperate characters, a woman whose vulgar husband had been scarce six months dead, had not she rushed to his side, and embraced him, and kissed him, and wept over him, and shrieked to the crowd that he was the only man she had ever loved?

But when they reached this dramatic climax of the clergyman's degradation, the scandalized gossips spoke in whispers lest some one, overhearing them, should charge them with spreading unclean tales.

Had the rector of Christ Church known the things that loose tongues were saying of him, had he known what had happened after he fell unconscious on the office steps—for no one had yet had the hardihood to tell him, and the newspapers, with becoming decency, had failed to publish the incident—would he have gone into his pulpit that April morning to preach to his people the gospel of a sinless Christ? It is not to be doubted. For he would have felt in his heart that he was guiltless and without stain, and, as yet, he had not

known fear. Indeed, he had not yet acknowledged his defeat. He was hurt, grieved, humiliated, but not conquered. His spirit was not that of the Hebrew psalmist pouring out his soul in the de profundis. It was rather that of Henly's hero thundering his pagan defiance at fate. The lines came into his mind now as he stood gazing from his window into the sunlight on the lawn, and brought to him a strange and unchristian consolation.

"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

"In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody but unbowed."

At the hour for service he entered the church, robed himself, and followed the poor remnant of his choir to the chancel in reverent processional. But when he looked out upon his congregation he experienced a shock more painful to him than that caused by the rioter's brick. There was but a handful of worshipers in the church. Pew after pew was empty. Great sections of pews were wholly devoid of occupants. Men and women whose devotion to the Church had led them, up to this time, against their inclinations, to continue their attendance on its services, were unwilling to-day, after the events of the past week, to hear the prayers and lessons read, or a sermon preached, by a priest who had so forgotten the duty and the dignity of his sacred calling. And of the toilers who had crowded the pews and overflowed into the aisles scarcely more than a month before, only a beggarly few were here to-day. Rich and poor alike had deserted and repudiated him. Even Ruth Tracy was not in her accustomed

place, nor could his searching eyes discover her anywhere in the church. Mary Bradley, too, was absent. Had both these women, from whom he had drawn so much comfort and inspiration in the past, on whom he had leaned in absolute confidence, of whose supreme loyalty he had never had the shadow of a doubt; had they too fallen by the wayside, too weak and skeptical to follow him to the end of the heaven-ordained path he had chosen to tread? Would God Almighty be the next to desert him?

For the first time in all his hapless crusade his heart began to fail him, a strange and insidious weakness crept in upon him. His hand trembled as he lifted the book and read:

"The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him."

The sound of his voice came back to him in dull echoes from the waste of vacant pews.

"Dearly beloved brethren, the Scripture moveth us in sundry places ——" His voice failed him, and he paused. But it was only for a moment. With stern resolution he fought back his weakness, gathered new strength, and went on with his service.

His sermon that morning—he had prepared it early the preceding week—was based upon the parable of the householder and the tares.

"God help us," he said in closing, "if we have mistaken the command of our Lord, and have gone out to gather up the tares, and, inadvertently and foolishly, have rooted up also the wheat with them. It were doubtless better that they should have grown together till the harvest time, when the Lord of the harvest, himself, would have gathered and separated them."

Then he sent out the alms-basins, and they came back to him to be presented at the altar, lined with a pathetic pittance.

As it was the first Sunday in the month he proceeded with the administration of the Holy Communion. He

uncovered the bread and the wine and set them out on the Lord's table. But there were few to partake of them. The chancel rail which, in other days, had been filled many times in succession with devout communicants, had room enough now and much to spare to accommodate all who had remained for the passing of the consecrated elements.

Soberly, devoutly, with a tenderness he had never felt before, he performed the office of the communion. It was only at the benediction that his heart and voice again failed him, and the last "Amen" came almost with a sob from his lips.

After the service was ended a few of his friends, men and women, remained to clasp his hand, to inquire about his wound, and to give him sympathy and encouragement. They were those who had stood by him and would still stand by him, even though they saw the church falling into wreck about his feet, because they believed in him and loved him. But not much was said. The feeling on the part of both priest and people was too deep to find ready expression in words. And when they came out into the open air they found that dark clouds had obscured the sun, and that the wind was blowing cold across the flying buttresses of the gray stone church.

As for Ruth Tracy, she could not have done otherwise than absent herself from the morning service. Her cheeks were still burning because of the revelation made to her by Mrs. Farrar, and because of Westgate's disclosure of the gossip of the town. After those things had come the riot with its tragical incidents, the murderous assault on the rector, the scandalous outcry of Mary Bradley. What wonder that she felt the solid ground of faith sinking beneath her feet, and that, frightened and dismayed, she dared not leave her home, and almost feared to look the members of her own household in the face. And what wonder that, in her distress, her mind and heart turned, half-uncon-

sciously, toward the lover whom she had dismissed, as being the one person in all the world who had soul and strength enough to rescue her from herself.

It was not greatly different with Mary Bradley. If the public, by reason of Friday's incident, had learned the secret of her heart, it would not find her so bold and shameless on the Sunday following as even to be seen outside her door. Indeed, from the hour when she had been thrust out from his presence, and had crept moaning home with her blood-stained garments on her, she had held herself in strict seclusion. Lamar had come, demanding an interview. The old woman with the wrinkled face had opened the door an inch, and had told him that Mary would not see him. He came again the following day and made his demand insistent. The old woman obeyed her instructions.

"You can't see her," she said. "Nobody can't see her."

"But I've got to see her. There's a thing I've got to settle with her."

"You can't settle with her to-day."

"To-morrow, then?"

"No, not to-morrow, nor next week, nor next year. She's through with ye."

"You infernal hag! What do you know about it? You go tell her to come out or I'll drag her out."

The old woman slammed the door in his face and locked and bolted it, and he went away cursing.

There were other callers—the sympathetic, the curious, the evil-minded. There was one answer at the door to all of them: Mrs. Bradley would see no one.

On Sunday evening, at dusk, Barry Malleson came. In response to his knock the old woman opened the door a crack.

"You can't see her," she said, before Barry had even a chance to speak. "She don't see nobody."

"Maybe," replied Barry, deprecatingly, "if she knew who it was she might be willing."

"Don't make no difference who it is," responded the old woman. "She wouldn't see the Lord from heaven."

Without further ado she closed the door and bolted it, and Barry turned sadly away.

But Mary Bradley, sitting alone in her room, thought she caught the sound of a familiar voice.

"Mother," she said, "was that Barry Malleson?"

And, without waiting for a reply, she swept across the room, unbolted the door, flung it open and called out to him:

"Barry!"

"Yes, Mary."

"Come back! I want you."

He came gladly. She took him into the little sitting-room. The shades at the windows were drawn close, and the lamp on the table burned dimly. Barry remembered the time when he came there and saw, through a partly opened doorway, the sheeted body of John Bradley lying in an adjoining room. It was not a pleasant memory.

In the half-light of the place the woman's face looked ghastly. Perhaps it was due to the way in which the shadows fell on it. Her eyes were still large and luminous indeed, but under them were dark crescents, and the fine curve of her lips was lost in a pathetic droop. Barry, looking on her, pitied her.

"I didn't come to bother you," he said. "I just wanted to see you. I wanted to tell you——"

She interrupted him: "I know. You are so good. I don't deserve it. I couldn't blame you if you hated me."

"I don't hate you, Mary. I love you. I don't care what they say. I don't care what you said on the office steps that day. I love you."

"You mustn't talk that way any more, Barry. I mustn't let you. I ought never to have let you talk that way, or think that way. I did you a wrong. In my eagerness for revenge on others I did you a great

wrong. I am sorry now. It was wicked in me to deceive you."

"Yes, that's what they say to me. They always told me you were deceiving me. It doesn't matter if you were. I harbor no resentment nor jealousy. I'll start in all over again. I'll begin my courtship anew, if you'll let me. And I'll teach you to outlive your love for the other fellow. That's what I came to tell you to-night."

"Barry, you have a heart of gold."

"Yes. You know that other fellow is impossible, Mary. He has a wife and children. And he's a good man. No better man ever lived."

"That's true, Barry. Oh, that's very true. He's too good to have been made the victim of my reckless folly. But I thought they had killed him. I thought they had killed him, and I was wild. I know he wasn't killed, but I haven't heard from him for two days. The suspense has been terrible. Barry, tell me what you know about him. Have you seen him?"

Her hands, lying on the table, were clasped tightly together, and she looked across at him as though she were ready to devour his anticipated words.

"Why, yes," replied Barry. "I went to see him Saturday. He had a bad wound on his head, but the doctor fixed him up all right, and he'll get over it in a few days. In fact he held service yesterday as usual."

She gave a great sigh of relief.

"I'm so glad!" she exclaimed, and repeated: "I'm so glad!"

"I don't think," added Barry, "that the brick-bat hurt him nearly as much as the fact that it came from the ranks of those whom he had befriended."

"I know. They were cowards; ingrates! They had murder in their hearts. As for me I'm through with them—forever."

The old blaze of indignation came into her eyes, and the ghost of a flame crept into her cheeks.

"I'm beginning to feel the same way about it," replied Barry. "You know I can't stand for what those fellows did to Farrar."

Her mind turned to another phase of the catastrophe.

"Barry," she asked, "does he know——" She paused, but he divined the question that was in her thought.

"I don't believe," he replied, "that he knows a thing. He was knocked insensible, and there isn't anybody who would go and tell him such a thing—unless it might be——"

"Who?"

"Jane Chichester."

After that, for a moment, neither Mrs. Bradley nor her visitor spoke. Both appeared to be deeply immersed in thought. Finally the woman looked up at him.

"Barry," she said, "I'm going away."

"Going away?"

"Yes. I can't stay here. It's impossible. I must go. For his sake I must go. I've thought it all out. I've begun to get ready."

"When are you going?"

"To-morrow, maybe. Next day, surely. I shall slip quietly away. No one but you will know it till after I've gone."

"Where are you going?"

"Out to my brother Jim's ranch. He has written for mother and me to come to him. We'll go now."

"And I'll go with you."

"You must not do that, Barry."

"Then I'll come later."

"No, Barry. I would only destroy your peace of mind and all your opportunities. Some day, very soon I hope, this dreadful trouble will be over, and then you'll get back into the old life again, and be happy."

"I shall never be happy without you."

"Oh, yes, you will. You will forget me. You

must forget me. I have been a traitor to you. I have been willing to sacrifice you to satisfy a passion for revenge. I have used you as a mere instrument to carry out my desires. I can atone for my wickedness only in one way: by compelling you to blot me out of your memory."

Barry looked at her in dumb incredulity. He had no conception of what lay in her mind, he could not fathom the meaning of the words she spoke to him. After a moment he said:

"I don't know anything about it, Mary. I don't understand it at all. I only know that if you go away and leave me—like that, it will break my heart."

She reached across the table and took both his hands in hers, as she had done once in her office in the Potter Building, and she looked into his eyes with a look vastly more tender and confident than she had given him on that day.

"Barry," she said, "you believe in me?"

"With all my heart."

"And you believe I am trying to do what is best for both of us?"

"I suppose you are."

"Then, for my sake, do what I ask of you. Don't follow me. Don't try to find me. Don't try to learn anything about me. And if the day or the hour should ever come when I feel that your true happiness can be promoted, even by one little jot, through any word or act of mine, I shall give it to you. There, you must be satisfied with that, Barry; you must."

As in the old days he had been unable to deny her anything she chose to ask, so now, under the spell of her gaze, he had no power to refuse her request. She rose from the table, still holding his hands in hers, and moved with him toward the door. He hardly knew that he was being led.

"And, Barry," she added, "you will do me one more favor? You have been my friend, my brother, my

loyal and devoted helper in everything. You will do me one more favor?"

"A hundred."

"If—if he should learn what I said and did that day, will you tell him, Barry—will you tell him that it is true that I love him, and that because I love him I have dropped out of his life forever? Will you tell him, Barry?"

"Sure; I'll tell him."

"Thank you! You are the dearest friend I ever had, the most loyal and unselfish. There, good-night!"

She released his hands, put her arms up about his neck, drew down his face to hers, and kissed him.

"There," she said again, "good-night! Good-bye!"

Amazed, thrilled, speechless, Barry found himself on the porch of the house, the door closed behind him, darkness, silence and the distant lights of the city before him as he stood.

Back of the closed door, again locked and bolted, Mary Bradley resumed her preparation for flight. Emotions, whispering and thundering by turns, followed each other in quick succession across her mind. Ah, but they were right who charged her with having a romantic fondness for the minister! It was more than a fondness. It was the one blinding passion of her pinched and sunless life, and it mattered little to her now who knew it. Time was when she had hoped, in some unknown way, in some ideal social state, by means of which she had but a dim and dream-driven conception, to gratify her longing. That was when, as a modern, scouting law, flouting religion, decrying the social order, she had deluded herself with the belief that she had a moral right to seek happiness where she could find it. Born in penury, reared to toil, trained to godlessness, steeped in a philosophy that taught her that love should never be restrained by man-made barriers, she had had neither the will nor the conscience to curb or master her imperious desire. But

now the end had come. The cup from which she would have drunk had been struck from her lips. It lay shattered at her feet, the red wine spilled and lost. So she must take herself away, out of his life. Not that she loved him less, but rather more; and so, loving him more, she was ready, for his sake, to sacrifice herself in order that reproach might never again fall upon him.

Through half the night, toiling and tempest-driven, she prepared for her departure. But when Monday came the desire to linger for yet another day overpowered her will, and she yielded. She ate little, slept little, talked little, but moved unceasingly about her narrow rooms. To the queries and protests and misgivings of her querulous old mother she turned, for the most part, a deaf ear. At dusk, on Monday evening, as if through some sudden impulse, she put on her hat and coat.

"Where you goin'?" inquired the old woman.

"I don't know, mother."

"How long you goin' to be gone?"

"A few minutes maybe; maybe forever."

"You talk queer; you act queer. I don't want you to go out."

"No harm will come to me, mother."

"I don't know about that. You might meet Steve."

"I'm not afraid of him."

"And if you meet him he might kill ye."

"Mother, you're crazy."

She bent over and kissed the wrinkled old face, unbolted the door, and went out into the night. The full moon was rising. Houses where poverty dwelt and desolation reigned were gilded on the east by the softest and most beautiful of all lights that ever rest on the dwelling-places of men. Westerly the shadows were deep and forbidding. Cloaked and veiled, the woman moved alone along the deserted street. Near the foot of the hill she reached the lane that led to the

foot-bridge across the stream above the mill. She turned in at the entrance and came presently to the bridge. She stood by the railing and looked out across the moonlit roofs of the factory buildings to the twinkling lights of the city that lay below her. Her eyes saw them, indeed, but to her mind they were invisible. It was on this bridge that she had once felt the touch and pressure of his supporting arm. And thereafter life had held no dearer hope for her than that she might once again experience such exultant joy. The very memory of it was sweeter than stolen waters on the lips of youth. After a few minutes she passed on, retracing, street after street, the path by which they had come that night. Midway of a certain block she paused. It was here that he had met her. But she did not turn back. She continued her journey until she reached Ruth Tracy's door. Not that she thought of entering here; she had no desire to do that. But it was here that he had found comfort and help in his arduous work, and so the very place was precious in her sight. It had never occurred to her to be jealous of Ruth Tracy. She had never conceived that the rector could stain his soul by falling in love with any other woman. But it came into her mind now, suddenly, that if her own desire for his love had been fulfilled, he would have proved himself equally as weak and wicked as though his affection had been centered on another than herself; some woman not his wife. Perhaps his God had saved him from debasement. Perhaps her passion for him, even though he should know of it, would excite in him only pity and disgust.

She did not tarry at the Tracy house, but turned back at once toward the center of the city. The warm, clear night had brought many people into the streets. It was not a careless nor a merry crowd. Sober and sullen looking men stood listlessly on corners, or strolled aimlessly along the pavement. Sad-eyed women, with

shawls covering their heads, passed by. Children, thinly clad, with soiled faces and stockingless feet, gazed hungrily in at the shop windows. She knew many of these people by sight and name, but she did not stop to speak to any of them, and, heavily veiled as she was, they did not recognize her.

At the corner by the Silver Star saloon she met Stephen Lamar. Hoping that he would not recognize her she bowed her head and hurried on. But he was not to be deceived nor passed by. He thrust himself across her path.

"Wait!" he said; "I want a word with you."

"I can't wait," she replied. "I am in haste. I have an errand to do."

"You have no errand half so important as is my business with you."

"But I don't choose to talk with you."

She made as if to pass on, but again he blocked her path.

"I know you don't," he replied, "but I choose to talk with you, and I'm going to do it—now."

His voice rose at the end, and he moved nearer to her. It was plain that he was both angry and determined. It was plain too that he had been drinking. His utterance was hoarse and thick, and he slurred an occasional word, as half-drunken men do. The controversy attracted the attention of people passing by, and they stopped to look and listen. She dreaded a scene. It would doubtless be wiser to humor him.

"Very well," she said. "You may walk with me. I am going toward home."

"No," he replied, "I'll not walk with you. We'll go in here to the Silver Star, and sit down quietly, and have it out alone."

He took her arm, turned her about, and moved with her to the side door of the saloon. She did not demur. So long as he must talk with her it might as well be there as elsewhere. They entered, crossed the hall,

and went into the private room, scene of many conferences between the labor leader and Bricky Hoover the workmen's champion.

An aproned waiter came in and stood at attention.

"Bring a glass of vermouth for this lady," said Lamar, "and the usual whiskey for me; and be quick about it."

He sat at the table and held his head in his hand, but he did not speak to her again until the drinks had been served.

Now that she saw him clearly in the light of the hanging electric lamp, she saw that he was changed. His face was gray, haggard and unshaven, and when his blood-shot eyes were open they rolled strangely. It was no wonder that his appearance gave evidence of the strain and suffering he had undergone. He had passed three terrible days and nights since that moment when he had seen this woman pillow the blood-stained head of the preacher on her breast, and had heard her declare her love for him. He had scarcely given a second thought to the fact that his position as a labor-leader was in jeopardy if it was not entirely lost; that the workingmen who had followed him blindly and confidently in times past had now turned upon him, denounced him and repudiated him. But that the woman with whom, as the whole city knew, he was desperately in love should publicly, shamelessly, in his very presence, declare her passionate fondness for this discredited priest, that was more than human nature could endure. It roused every bitter, hateful, malignant passion of which his heart was capable. He had sought her at her home and she had refused to see him. The refusal had made him desperate. So, without sleep, without food, torn with jealousy, consumed by rage, his brain fired by constant and deep potations, he had waited and watched his chance to settle with her. Now he had it.

She did not drink her wine, but he drained his glass of whiskey at a gulp. Then he got up and went over and turned the key in the lock of the door leading into the hall.

"Steve," she said, "unlock that door."

"I don't want to be interrupted," he explained. "This is a private interview."

"Unlock that door!"

He looked into her eyes to see how determined she might be, and it was evident that he saw. The corners of his mouth twitched in a curious smile, but he unlocked the door, and came back and sat down again at the table opposite her.

"Now," she asked, "what is it that you want to say to me?"

"I want to know why you treat me like a dog."

"Why should I treat you like a man?"

"Because I've done a man's work for you. I brought on this strike because you wanted it brought on. When you came and begged me to have it called off I moved heaven and earth to carry out your will, but it couldn't be done. It was too late. I told you it was too late. But I did my best. And what happened? A riot. A bloody, dirty riot. I blasted my own career. These workingmen are through with me. They are cursing me to-night for a coward and a traitor. They can go to hell cursing for all I care. But as for you, I want pay for what I've done for you. Do you hear? I want my pay!"

"What kind of pay?"

"I want you."

"You can't have me."

She straightened up in her chair and looked him resolutely in the eyes. She saw his lips working but no sound came from them. It was a full minute before he regained the use of his voice. Then he asked, calmly enough:

"Why can't I have you?"

"Because I don't love you. No other reason is necessary."

"I'll make you love me; if not to-night, then to-morrow; if not to-morrow, then next day. Oh, I can do it. You know I can do it."

He leaned across the table toward her and continued:

"We'll go away from here. This is only a pest-hole anyway. We'll go away. We'll live in luxury. Oh, we can do it. I have enough. These fools don't know it, but I haven't worked for 'em all these years just for the love o' the thing. There's been money in it."

He laughed a little, mechanically, as though at his own shrewdness, and again continued:

"So it's all right. You'll go. You've got to go. I can't live without you. I won't live without you."

Again his voice rose excitedly, his mouth twitched, his face took on a strange and evil expression. She began to fear him. She decided that she must, for her own safety, bring the interview to a close, and do it in so peremptory a manner as to silence him. Rising to her feet she said:

"It's only a waste of breath to discuss it, Steve. I cannot and shall not do what you wish. I don't want to see you again nor talk to you again. And I don't want you ever again to come near me. Now, I'm going home."

"Not yet. Just a moment. It happens, for instance, that you're in love with some one else?"

"That is none of your business."

"By God, it is my business! Oh, I know! I saw you. I heard you, when you thought his damned skull was cracked, and you whined over him as if he were a sick baby. What right have you got, anyway, to love this married priest?"

He was bellowing like a mad beast now; but she did not cower, nor tremble, nor show any sign of fear. In the face of danger it was her place to be resolute.

"A right," she answered him, "that requires no permission from you."

"You don't deny it, then?"

"I don't deny it."

"And you're not ashamed of it?"

"I'm not ashamed of it. I glory in it."

He had not risen with her, but he pulled himself, now, unsteadily to his feet.

"I've got only one answer to make to that," he said. "You fondle that black-coated, white-livered priest just once more, and I'll send the souls of both of you straight to hell."

"Steve, you coward, what do you mean?"

"Mean? I mean what I say. I'll have what belongs to me or I'll kill the man that robs me, and the woman that lets him. He had his kisses last Friday. I haven't had mine yet. But I'm going to have 'em—to-night."

He started toward her, staggering as he went. She backed away from him and tried to reach the door, but he blocked her path.

"Let me pass!" she cried. "Don't you dare to stop me! Don't you dare to lay a finger on me!"

He paid no heed to her command. He lurched forward, even as she spoke, and before she could escape him he had seized her and crushed her in his arms. She cried out in terror, and tried to free herself, but she was helpless. Half-drunken as he was, he seemed, nevertheless, to be possessed of maniacal strength. Men in the barroom adjoining heard the cry and the struggle, and burst into the room and released her from his grasp, and held her assailant while she hurried away. When he saw that she was gone he became suddenly calm, self-possessed, genial. He showed no resentment toward those who had caught and restrained him. He simulated good-nature as shrewdly and cleverly as do the criminal insane. His captors, now his companions, lent themselves readily to the decep-

tion. Now that the incident was closed it was of small moment to them. It was not a thing of rare occurrence, anyway, to have the sodden hangers-on at the Silver Star aroused by a woman's scream.

So Steve went out and mingled familiarly with the men at the bar; laughed at their questionable jokes about his gallantry, tossed dice with them, drank with them, and bade them good-night with as much ease and carelessness as though his heart were not a seething whirlpool of murderous thought.

As for Mary Bradley, she hastened through the streets toward her home, her face burning with anger and humiliation. If she had disliked and hated Stephen Lamar before, she loathed him now. Then, suddenly, she remembered his threat against her and the rector. What did he mean by it? Murder? She paused in her swift pace, overcome by fear. Not fear for herself. It mattered little what vengeance he might choose to inflict on her. But was the man whom she loved in danger? Would this desperate, drink-crazed monster seek to carry out his threat against the rector of Christ Church? Was it not her duty to warn the intended victim? For one moment she stood irresolute, then she turned in her tracks and hastened back toward the center of the city.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FINAL TRAGEDY

THE rectory of Christ Church was a gloomy place that Monday evening. The mistress of the house was ill. She had been failing for weeks—slowly at first, but with terrible rapidity as the days wore on. Now the end was almost in sight. Her interview with Ruth Tracy on the Friday afternoon before had left her at the point of collapse. Then had followed the news of the riot. After that her husband had been brought home, bandaged and bloody, victim of an insensate mob. What wonder that she was overwhelmed, physically and mentally, by crowding calamities? When the doctor came from her room that Friday night he looked grave and doubtful. He had expected the collapse. It had been imminent for weeks, but the severity of it startled him. Not that there was any organic disease, he explained, but these cases of extreme nervous prostration were most difficult to treat. Sedatives had only a temporary effect; medicines of any kind would be of but little avail. Indeed the only real hope lay in extra-professional treatment, particularly along the line of mental suggestion. At best the prognosis of the case had little in it that was encouraging.

Ruth Tracy heard of Mrs. Farrar's serious illness, and sent a trained nurse at once to care for her. She felt that this much, at least, it was her right and her duty to do.

If Sunday had been a sorrowful day in the rector's household, Monday was deadening. The minister himself, owing to certain secondary results of his injury,

had been forbidden by his physician to go out. Few people had called at the rectory during the day. He had not yet heard the scandalous gossip of the town that connected his name with Mary Bradley's.

When evening came he, himself, put his children to bed. He heard their pathetic little prayers for their mother. Then he kissed them good-night, and went down to his study with wet eyes.

Later on he ascended again to his wife's chamber. The nurse had gone out for the moment, and he drew a chair up by the side of the bed and sat there. She saw that he had been weeping. She said:

"Why are your eyes wet, Robert?"

"I have been putting the children to bed," he replied, "and they were praying for you. It touched me."

"The precious dears! You'll be very kind to them, and patient with them, won't you, Robert, after I am gone?"

"You're not going, Alice. Not for many, many years yet."

"Don't talk that way, Robert. Please don't. You know how much better it is that I should go now. And when you marry again ——"

"I'm going to marry you again, dear. We're going to be lovers again, just as we were in the old days."

"But, Robert, I ——"

"Oh, I know. I've been thoughtless and inconsiderate. I haven't appreciated you at your worth. But you'll find me different after this. I've had some heart-searching days of late."

"No, Robert, you've been very good to me. I've often wondered how you could have been so good, for I've never been able to—to reach you. But I have loved you so—and the children ——"

"There, sweetheart, never mind now. Don't talk any more to-night. Try to get a little sleep and rest."

With tender fingers he pushed back a stray lock of her hair, and she reached out and found his hand and

held it, and, lying so, with his hand clasped in both of hers, she fell asleep.

When the nurse returned he released himself gently from her grasp and went back down-stairs. He glanced at the clock in the hall and saw that it was after nine. A deskful of neglected work awaited him in his study and he felt that he must try to dispose of it. At that moment he heard the door-bell ring, and, knowing that the one young and inexperienced but inexpensive maid now in their employ was still out, he went, himself, to answer it. He found Mary Bradley there. He greeted her cordially and ushered her into the parlor, the shades of which had not yet been drawn. He turned on the lights and placed a chair for her, for he saw, by her face, that she was weary and depressed.

"I had no right to come," she said breathlessly, "but I wanted ——"

"Yes, you had a right to come," he interrupted her. "I do not know your errand, but I am glad you came. There are some things I want to know that I believe you can tell me."

In her effort to fathom his meaning she forgot her errand.

"What are they?" she inquired.

"Will you tell me this?" he asked. "I have been thinking about it all day. You know I have been trying to bring religion into the lives of the men and women who work, and you see what a dismal failure I have made of it. What has been the matter? Did I go about it in the wrong way? You have been a working woman; surely you can tell me."

"The fault has been theirs, Mr. Farrar, not yours."

"But what blunder did I commit that these people should repudiate both me and my religion? I cannot understand it."

"You committed no blunder. They simply did not want religion."

"Why did they not want it?"

"Because it doesn't promise them good food, and fine clothes, and plenty of leisure."

"But it gives them the promise of an eternity of happiness."

"Eternity is too far away for them. They want their good things in this life. They want to live their lives as they will, to go and come as they choose, to be free from rules that bind them, from laws that oppress them, from customs that restrain them. I, myself, have taught them that that is their right as human beings."

"And have you taught them wisely?"

"I don't know. Oh, I don't know! Who can say what is wise, or right, or good? Surely not I; not I!"

She began to wring her hands in apparent self-reproach. She seemed so distraught that he pitied her. Her face was expressive of an agony that he could but dimly understand.

"God forgive us," he said, "if we have both been wrong. But you came to see me on some special errand. Pardon me for interjecting my own troubles. They seem to me to be mountains high to-night. Perhaps yours are even greater. How can I help you?"

"Oh, I had almost forgotten. I came to warn you. You are in danger."

"What kind of danger is it now?"

"A man has threatened to kill you."

"I am not surprised. Some of those whom I have tried to befriend have turned against me very bitterly."

"But this man has a special grievance."

"Who is he?"

"Stephen Lamar."

"What is his special grievance?"

"He is ——" She hesitated.

"He is what, Mrs. Bradley?"

"He is jealous of you."

"On whose account?"

"On mine."

"Why should he be jealous of me? Is it not Barry

Malleson who is contending with him for your favor?"

"I have told Barry that he must not think of me again."

"And are you then so deeply in love with Lamar?" He said it regretfully, almost reproachfully. He could not reconcile himself to the thought of a union between such a man as Lamar and such a woman as this.

She drew herself up proudly. "No!" she cried. "I am not in love with him. I hate him! I despise him!"

He stared at her in astonishment. What new mystery was this? What additional catastrophe was impending? In what fresh web of calamity was he becoming entangled?

"But why," he asked, "should Lamar be jealous of me? Why should he want to kill me? What have I done to call forth such a feeling on his part?"

"Nothing, Mr. Farrar; nothing; nothing! I have done it all."

"What have you done?"

"I told him a thing that angered him."

"What did you tell him?"

She knew, by the look in his eyes, that he would brook no evasion or denial of his demand. Nor had she, any longer, any desire either to evade or deny. They were only the big things of life that mattered now. And this was the big thing, the tremendous thing of her life, and something that he had a right to know, and that he ought to know. She flung her arms wide as if to unlock her heart and let her secret out.

"I told him that I loved you!" she cried. "I told him that I was not ashamed of it! I told him that I gloried in it!"

She looked at the minister defiantly, as though daring him to contradict her. Her face was very white, and her hands were clenched and moving. He

was speechless, astounded. He rose to his feet and stared at the woman incredulously. When, at last, he found his voice he said:

"But, Mrs. Bradley, it is not true. Why did you say it? It can't be true! It must not be true!"

"Oh, but it is true!" she protested. "It's the truest thing that ever was or will be. And it's because he knows it's true that he wants to kill you. The coward! The monster!"

Her voice had grown high and shrill. Her eyes flashed with alternate hate, devotion and despair. Her whole body was quivering with the intensity of her emotion. It was apparent to the rector that a point had been reached beyond which both questionings and reproof would be not only futile but disastrous. Her imperative need now was to be soothed and comforted. He passed around the table to her and laid his hand on her shoulder. His touch had quieted others, perhaps it would quiet her. His hope was not vain. Under the magic pressure of his hand she suddenly found her anger gone, and the tempest in her hot heart stilled. A wave of deep contrition swept in upon her, and she sank, penitent and sobbing, at his feet.

"Forgive me!" she moaned. "I have been so wicked and so weak, and so utterly unjust to you. I shall not trouble you any more. I'm going away, where you will never see me nor hear of me again. But," and she lifted her pallid, tear-wet face to his, "it is true, true, true that I have loved you."

Gently, reverently, with white-hearted courtesy, he bent over her, took her hands, and lifted her to her feet.

"May our dear Lord look kindly on you," he said, "and inspire you with that love for Him which alone can quiet and satisfy the unruly heart."

"You are—very good," she replied; "very good! I will—go—now."

She released her hands from his and drew them

across her eyes as if to banish some vision that enthralled her, and turned toward the door. But at the first step her physical strength failed her, she tottered and would have fallen, so limp and nerveless was she, had he not sprung to her side and held her to her feet. Once again, as on that night at the bridge, she felt the pressure of his arm about her. It revived her, strengthened her, thrilled her through with new and exultant life. So, supported and revivified, she moved with him across the room toward the hall.

"Thank you!" she said. "It was foolish of me to be faint. But I am very strong now. Good-night!"

"No," he replied, "I cannot let you go alone. You are not fit. Sit here and I will call a cab, and I'll send the nurse to stay with you till it comes."

His will was still her law and she obeyed. So he placed her in a chair and hurried away. But, when he was gone, she was seized with a sudden desire to escape —before he should return—before others should come and find her there—before her courage should utterly fail. She rose, hurried down the hall, pushed back the snap-lock of the door which she opened and closed behind her, went down the steps to the walk, and started to cross the rectory lawn to the street.

A man stepped out from the shadows beneath the parlor bay, gripped her shoulder, and swung her around till she faced him. By the light of the full moon she saw that it was Stephen Lamar. His eyes were blazing with murderous passion. His voice, as he spoke, was thick and hoarse.

"I tracked you here," he said. "I saw you—through the window. I told you—if you did it once more—I'd kill you both. I'm going—to do it."

Before she could move, or speak, or scream, there came a flash, a report, a wisp of curling smoke; she staggered, fell, lay prone on the rectory lawn, and there she died.

He turned and went up the steps to the door from

which she had just emerged, and tried to open it, and found it locked. He threw his weight against it, but it would not yield.

Two men, standing at the street-corner, engaged in conversation, heard the pistol-shot, and saw the woman as she fell. They ran, and met the man as he lurched down the rectory steps. For a moment he held them at bay at the point of his revolver. Then he turned the weapon on himself and fired two shots in quick succession. He fell plunging to the earth. On his sprawling body and distorted face the light of the full moon struck. But, where Mary Bradley lay, the shadow of the spire of Christ Church rested, like the shadow of the hand of a pitying God.

CHAPTER XXII

AN EPISCOPAL BENEDICTION

THE tragedy was now complete. Its climax had been reached when two souls were thrust, unshriven, into the Great Presence. The city gasped and shuddered, and rioted in the rehearsal of strange and conflicting stories. But at the heart of every one of them, tangled in its sordid meshes, was the name of the rector of Christ Church. The motive for the murder of Mary Bradley was known of all men. If Lamar, dead by his own hand, had lived to shout it from the housetops, it could not have been better or more widely understood. Yet no one now charged the minister with conscious guilt. His life had been too open and too clean to make that believable. It was said of him now only that he had been the victim of his own deplorable theories and his mistaken zeal. But it was plain to every one that the end had been reached. His old parishioners, friend and foe alike, admitted and declared that his further ministrations at Christ Church had become impossible. He, himself, in an hour of forced calmness and deliberate thought, had reached the same inevitable conclusion. "Ye shall know them by their fruits." The fruits of his ministry, so far as he could now see, had been scandal, riot, bloodshed, murder, suicide, a wrecked and desolated church; an unhallowed harvest. And the future held no hope of better things.

For three days he wrestled with himself in agony. On the morning of the fourth day he boarded a train, bound for the see city, to meet a telegraphed appointment with his bishop. Twenty miles out Barry Malle-

son came wandering down the aisle of the car and caught sight of him.

"Why, Farrar," exclaimed Barry, "I didn't know you were on the train! Come into the Pullman with me."

"No, thank you! I change at the junction, but I'd be glad to have you sit with me for a while."

Barry needed no second invitation. He dropped into the aisle end of the seat; but when he had settled himself comfortably he had nothing to say. If the rector's face gave evidence of the shock and strain he had undergone, Barry's countenance and manner were still more indicative of the intense suffering he had endured.

"You're going to New York?" asked the rector, finally.

"Yes. It doesn't matter much. But that seems to be the obvious place. If I get tired of it there I'll come back in a day or two, and go west. I think maybe a taste of ranch life might help some. But I can't stay here. You know, Farrar, that's impossible."

"I understand. I too must leave the city. Conditions here make it imperative."

"And where will you go?"

"God knows! I have no plans."

Barry looked at his companion pityingly. In the midst of his own grief he had a heart of sympathy for the defeated and despairing rector. For a few moments there was silence between them. Then Barry spoke up again.

"You know, Farrar, this thing has left me in a whirl. I feel as though I were still whirling. I try to stop, and get out of it, and get my head, but I can't. There's so much about it all that I don't understand."

"I don't wonder. The whole thing is a terrible mystery."

"Not that I'm blaming her, you know. I couldn't do that. She wasn't to blame for anything. Why, do you know, I never even blamed her for being fond of

you. And of course I didn't charge it up to you. Nobody does, Farrar. You can rest easy on that score. It was just one of those things that neither of you could help."

"Thank you, Barry!"

"And that reminds me. That night when I saw her last—it was last Sunday; God in heaven! but it seems a year—well, that night she asked me to do her one favor. She said she was going away. She said if you ever found out what she said on the factory steps that day of the riot, I should tell you that it was true; I should tell you that because she loved you she was going to drop out of your life forever—drop out—of your life—forever."

Barry straightened himself out as he sat, thrust his hands into his trousers pockets, and stared hard at the back of the seat in front of him. Something in the last phrase that had left his lips had set his brain to whirling again. The rector laid a comforting hand on his knee.

"You are very kind to tell me this," he said. "You have a big and generous heart, Barry. We can each mourn over her fate, without entrenching on the domain of the other."

Apparently Barry did not hear him. He was still staring at the back of the seat, and the muscles of his jaws could be seen moving under the pallid skin of his face. But he roused himself, after a moment, and said:

"I told her I would; sure I would. And then, Farrar, do you know what she did? Do you know?"

"No, Barry."

"Well—I wouldn't whisper it to another human being but you, you know that, it's too—sacred."

His voice choked a little, but he went on:

"Well—she put her arms around my neck—and kissed me."

He did not give way to tears nor manifest any of the

usual signs of emotion. But on his face was a look of awe and tenderness, as if some holy and wonderful vision had just been revealed to his mortal eyes.

At the junction the rector bade him Godspeed, and left him to continue his journey alone. But, somehow, the sight and expression of Barry's dull and simple grief had served to soften the harsh musings with which the minister's own mind was filled.

It was late afternoon when he reached the episcopal residence. A rich and pious widow, dying, had made testamentary provision for the erection of this beautiful bishop's home, whereupon disgruntled heirs had severed their relations with the Church, and had sought religious shelter in another fold.

The rector approached the quaintly fashioned entrance by a path bordered with blossoming crocuses and tulips, rioting in a very wantonness of color. The sinking sun threw a mellow, yellow light on the flowers, on the fresh green of the lawn, on a spreading maple just starting into leaf. But the minister saw nothing and realized nothing of the peace and beauty that surrounded him. His step was heavy, his eyes were dim, his face was the face of one who has witnessed horrors, and cannot shut out the sight or memory of them.

The bishop was awaiting him. If he had framed any words of condemnation for this priest of his diocese, one look at the man himself drove them utterly and forever from his mind. At a glance he read in the countenance of the minister a story of suffering, of humiliation, of bitter and blinding defeat, that would have made episcopal reproof as cruel as it was unnecessary.

He put his arm tenderly about his visitor's shoulder and led him to a chair.

"I know it all, Farrar," he said. "What I have not heard and read I have easily divined. I suffer with you."

If the rector heard him he paid no heed to his words. He was there on his own errand, his message was on his lips, and he must deliver it.

"Bishop, I have come to hand back to you the shattered remnant of a sacred trust. I have not been unfaithful to it, but my administration of it has been a tragic failure."

"I know, Farrar. You have been ahead of your generation. You have tried to do things for which the world is not ready. That is the reason you have failed."

"That may be so. But it remains true, nevertheless, that I have wrecked my church, and have brought discredit on the religion of Christ. I am innocent of evil intention, but I am guilty of the actual failure, and I stand ready to suffer the penalty."

"My dear man, do not think too harshly of yourself. You have simply tried to do a beautiful and an impossible thing. Disaster was inevitable. You thought, as did the beloved of Isaiah, that you had planted your vineyard 'with the choicest vine.' And you 'looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.' It could not have done otherwise."

"Pardon me, Bishop, but that is what I do not yet understand. Why should such an unhallowed harvest, unbelief, scandal, riot, murder, suicide, follow on the preaching of the simple gospel of Christ?"

"Ah, but it was not the simple gospel of Christ that you preached. Christ never concerned Himself with economic problems, nor with the reorganization of human society. There are some, I know, who affect to admire and reverence Him, who hold, with great show of learning, that His message was primarily to the Galilean peasants, and so to all whose necks were bowed under the Roman yoke, and so to all the world, that men should rise and scatter their oppressors, and establish an earthly kingdom of justice and righteousness. These do but pervert His teaching, and degrade

His gospel. His message was wholly to the soul of the individual man that he should turn spiritually from darkness to light. And having so turned, it would necessarily follow that man's material environment would undergo a similar beneficent change."

"But why should not the Church, in order to do her perfect work on earth, face the whole life of man, physical, industrial and social, as well as spiritual?"

"Because it is not her province to transform the environment of men. Jesus Christ sought only to transform the man. He was satisfied to have the man deal thereafter with his own environment. Social reform is possible only through spiritual renewal. To have a new society we must first have new men. When the regeneration of the individual has been accomplished, society itself will, perforce, be regenerated, and a social organization that will do justice to all men will spring automatically into existence. I tried to make this clear to you that night at the Tracy house."

"I know. I have been too impatient to await the spiritual regeneration. My heart has gone out to the poor and churchless of my own day who are suffering for material and spiritual bread."

"Your heart does you credit. No servant of Christ should ignore or neglect the poor. They were very close to Him in His lifetime. They should be special objects of our care in this day. But the mission of the Church is not alone to the poor; the message of Christ was to all men. You have permitted your passionate sympathy for the poor and the oppressed to run away with your judgment, to destroy your sense of proportion, to—there, Farrar, forgive me! I did not mean to scold or condemn you; it is too late for that. All I want to do to-day is to help you if I may."

"Nor did I come, Bishop, to argue my case anew, nor to plead justification for my conduct, nor to make excuses for my failures. I came to tell you that my service at Christ Church is at an end. The vestry

holds my letter of resignation. It remained only for me to make acknowledgment to you as my Reverend Father in God, of your kindness, and patience, and fatherly solicitude, and to beg your forgiveness, if I may, for all that I have said or done that has caused you trouble or sorrow, or that has cast discredit on the Church of your love and care."

"You have my forgiveness without the asking, Farrar. It is true that I have deeply deplored the situation in your parish, but I have had no resentment toward you, because, while I have believed you to be mistaken, I have known you to be utterly conscientious, and loyal."

"That is true, Bishop."

"And in that respect you were in very different case from those priests who, having lost faith in certain vital points in the principles of our religion and the doctrines of our Church, have, nevertheless, insisted on remaining with us and preaching heterodoxy from the shelter of our pulpits. That, in my judgment, is not only ungrateful and dishonest, but borders very close upon downright treason. You, on the other hand, in all your aspirations and ambitions, have been faithful to the precepts of our religion and the tenets of our Church. For that I commend you and rejoice in you."

"You are very good to me, Bishop."

"Let me add that I have no doubt of the wisdom and expediency of your course in resigning your office as rector of Christ Church. Now then; what are your plans?"

"I have none. I have thought nothing out except that I must go away. My wife is ill. The burden of these things has been too great for her to bear. I do not know how soon she can be moved. But when I told her, last night, that we would go elsewhere, the news seemed to give her new life. I believe that in some other and distant environment she will find her lost health and her old happiness."

"I pray that it may be so. But you must not leave the ministry of the Church, Farrar. We need such men as you. You are still young, but you have learned wisdom by sad and bitter experience. You were never better prepared to preach Christ's religion than you are now. And some day you will come into your own."

The rector turned his eyes to the window and looked out across the lawn to the Gothic pinnacles of the church on which the glory of the setting sun still lay. It was apparent that he was in deep thought, and for a moment he did not reply. Then he looked back at the prelate.

"Bishop," he said, "I think it is your faith in me that has saved me. For days I have seen nothing before me but the blackness of the pit. I come here, and you, whom I have perhaps wronged most deeply, are most ready to forgive me and help me. In my own city I have yielded because I have been bludgeoned into it; but you, by your magnanimity—you bring me—to my knees—in true repentance."

He laid his arms on the table and bowed his head on his arms. There was no longer any doubt that he was not only broken, but also repentant.

The bishop rose from his chair, crossed over to the penitent priest and laid his arm once more affectionately about his shoulders.

"Farrar," he said, "God bless you! I love you."

Underneath his hand he felt the broad shoulders tremble. He went on comfortingly:

"This is not the end; it is but the beginning. You are going to start a new career. I have already for you, in my mind, an outpost of the Church, in another diocese, where I believe your great talent and your love for neglected men will lead to the establishment of a mighty stronghold of our religion."

The rector sprang to his feet and dashed the tears from his eyes.

"You bring me a message," he said, "straight from

God. An outpost on the fighting line will be my delight. Bishop, you have not only saved me, you have invigorated and inspired me. How can I show my gratitude?"

"By preaching, hereafter, the simple gospel of Christ as I have explained it to you. But enough of this. We have disposed of the case; let's talk of other things. Come and have dinner with me, and we'll discuss the state of the Church at large."

And, with his arm still resting on the broad shoulders of the rector, the wise and big-hearted prelate led his guest from the room.

CHAPTER XXIII

REHABILITATION

To restore the human body to a state of health after the shock of a severe illness is a long and tedious task. It is not different with the body politic; it is not different with communities, with churches, or with business.

April had melted into May, and May had blossomed into June before life in the city began to take on its normal aspect. The riot at the Malleson mills had been the climax of the labor troubles. It was the beginning of the end. The striking workmen and their sympathizers had neither the strength nor the courage to make any further demonstration of physical force. They were beaten, cowed, utterly disheartened. Strike-breakers and non-union workmen passed to and fro along the street unmolested, save that now and then the boastful bearing of some one of them invited an epithet or a blow. But there was no general disorder. The mills had been opened, the wheels were turning, smoke belched from the chimneys; but the complement of workmen had not yet been obtained. The strike had, indeed, been declared off, but Mr. Malleson refused, as he had said he would refuse, to take back any of the workmen who had voluntarily left his employ.

Westgate went to him, one day, and, in language which he alone dared use to him, pointed out the folly of his course. The mills were not being worked to half their capacity. They were being run at an actual loss. Business in the city was still stagnant. Some of the workmen had gone elsewhere, some of them were

engaged in other occupations, many of them were still idle. It stood to reason that the old men, who were familiar with the plant and the machinery, could do much better and more profitable work than men who were new and untried. Indeed, that was already the experience of the management. Sound business judgment required the reëmployment of the old workmen. All this Westgate told the president of the company, and he told him more. He told him that the time for stubbornness and resentment had passed. That his men were human beings like himself. That he had no moral right to condemn them to poverty or chance employment simply to satisfy a grudge. That the time had come when charity for the weakness of others should be displayed, good feeling restored, and those friendly relations between capital and labor, which alone can ensure the prosperity of both, should be firmly reëstablished. And Westgate's counsel finally prevailed.

When it became known that Mr. Malleson was willing to let bygones be bygones, his old men came back to him, one by one, for he still refused to take them in a body, and were given their old places so far as that was practicable or possible. But Bricky Hoover did not come back. After the riot he had dropped out of sight. What had become of him no one knew. His tall and angular figure, crowned by the shock of dull red hair, was never again seen on the streets of the city.

Christ Church, too, pulled itself slowly out of the pit into which it had fallen. The resignation of the Reverend Robert Bruce Farrar as rector of the church was accepted without comment. No member of the vestry cared to criticize or condemn him further. So soon as his wife was able to travel he had gone away, to some out-of-the-way place in the far west it was said, where the calm serenity of Christ Church parish would never be disturbed by him again. Yet there were those who missed him; "sorrowing most of all . . . that they should see his face no more."

In due time the vestry notified the bishop, in accordance with the canon, that it proposed to elect, as rector of Christ Church, the Reverend Dr. Marbury, a man of good report and of great learning, devoted to the godly maintenance of organized religion in pursuance of the forms and customs of the Church.

So Dr. Marbury came. He was politic and gracious, kind-hearted and wise. Slowly but none the less effectively the breach in the parish was healed. The old parishioners came back. The institutions and charities of the church were placed once more upon a solid footing. The poor were relieved, the sick were visited, the lowly were befriended, the stranger was welcomed to the shelter of the church.

One beautiful September Sunday, at the close of the morning service, as Ruth Tracy and her mother moved down the aisle chatting with their friends and neighbors, Philip Westgate joined them. He had just returned from a long business journey in the far west. Mother and daughter greeted him pleasantly, and he accompanied them to their car waiting for them at the curb.

"Philip," said Mrs. Tracy, "you'll come and have luncheon with us to-day, won't you? I want to hear about that wonderful trip. We'll call for your mother on the way up—she always gets away from service ahead of me—and we'll have a nice, comfortable visit."

He glanced at Ruth's face, and, although she was looking the other way, he saw in it no sign of disapproval.

"Thank you, Mrs. Tracy!" he said. "It is very kind of you. I'm sure mother will enjoy it; and it will give me great pleasure to come."

He handed the elder woman into the car, and turned to Ruth. She was still looking away from him.

"Come, Ruth!" said her mother. "The car is waiting. What are you mooning about?"

"I was thinking," replied Ruth; but just there Westgate interrupted her:

"She was thinking," he suggested, "what a glorious day it would be to walk home."

The girl smiled and turned toward him. "If you mean that for an invitation, Philip," she said, "it's accepted."

Mrs. Tracy felt the balmy air sweep her face as she went on alone in luxurious flight, while the contemplation of the incident at the curb and its possible sequel gave her vastly more comfort and satisfaction than had the pious assurances of the Reverend Dr. Marbury in his morning sermon.

Both Ruth and Westgate recalled that September morning, a year before, when they had walked home together from the church, and discord had overtaken them on their way. But neither of them spoke of it. It was a thing too long gone by, and an incident that perhaps it were better, after all, to forget.

It was in the middle of the second block that Westgate said to her:

"I think I ought to tell you that I saw Mr. Farrar in the west."

"Indeed?"

Her face paled a little, and her breath came quickly; otherwise she manifested no loss of composure.

"Yes. He is settled in a parish in Apollo City. Our bishop made it possible for him to go there. I heard that he was there, and being in that neighborhood I went over to see him."

"I hope he is very happy and contented."

"I never saw a man more absorbed in his work, or more enthusiastic about it. You know Apollo City is the center of a great agricultural and grazing region. Farmers and stock men come fifty miles in their automobiles to church. He has captured them all. It is an extremely democratic community, and a democratic church. Why, he tells me that the present church

building was erected by gifts of an exactly equal amount from three hundred subscribers. That gives you an idea of the social equality that prevails out there."

"He must be pleased with that."

"He is delighted with it. He feels that he has been fitted into his proper niche."

She waited a moment for him to continue his story, but he was silent. It was plain that if she would know more she must inquire. She felt that she must know more, and she inquired.

"And Mrs. Farrar? What about her?"

"Oh, she is quite herself again. She goes with him everywhere. At the time I visited them they had just returned from making a sick-call together, twenty-five miles away."

"That's splendid! How happy she must be!"

"I think she is, very happy. She looks it, and talks it. She seems to feel that she is helping her husband in his work, and that he depends on her, and that fact gives her supreme joy."

"I'm so glad!"

She put her handkerchief to her eyes and brushed away some tears that had gathered there. He saw the movement and he became silent. It was not his purpose nor his wish to arouse unhappy memories. She divined his thought, and, still eager for information, and fearful lest she might not receive it, she urged him impulsively.

"But tell me, Philip. Tell me everything. Was he glad to see you? Did he inquire about Christ Church? Does he feel bitterly toward us here?"

When he found that she really wanted to know he threw off his reserve.

"I think," he replied, "that he was very glad to see me, though I took him by surprise. He is not a man who harbors resentments, and, now that it is all over, I felt that I could not afford to hold any grudge against

him. That is why I went to see him. I told him so; we got back on the old footing, and he opened his heart to me. Yes, he asked after all of you back here. And he wanted to know about Christ Church. Do you remember how eagerly Philip Nolan, the Man without a Country, drank in, on his death bed, the news from home? Well, Mr. Farrar reminded me of Nolan. And I told him—I told him everything I knew or could think of."

"Philip, you're an angel."

Again the handkerchief went to her eyes. Westgate, paying no heed to her exclamation, hurried on:

"And he has no bitter feeling toward any one. He couldn't lay up things like that. I've already told you that he's not a man who harbors resentments. It's not in his nature. But the memory of what he passed through here still haunts him. It always will haunt him. His experience was too terrible and tragic to be soon forgotten. Yet he blames no one but himself. He says the bishop was almost like a heavenly father to him."

"The bishop is a saint!"

Lest she should make a spectacle of herself on the street, Ruth gave a final dab at her eyes, and then resolutely put her handkerchief away.

"Oh," said Westgate, "I almost forgot to tell you. I saw Barry Malleson out there, too."

"You did? Barry Malleson?"

"Yes, he rode into Apollo City on horseback while I was there. He was flannel-shirted, soft-hatted, belted and spurred, in regular cowboy style. He had come up from about fifty miles down state with Jim Crane, Mrs. Bradley's brother. Crane has a ranch down there somewhere. You know he came east to his sister's funeral; Barry met him here, and when he went out into that country he hunted Crane up. It seems they have become great friends. They came up to Apollo City to buy stock, and incidentally to call on Mr. Farrar."

"How lovely! Was Barry glad to see you?"

"Glad! I thought he would never let go my hand. He insisted on my coming to visit him. He's living down at Nogalouche."

"Where?"

Ruth stopped in her tracks and turned to face her companion.

"At Nogalouche. Why?"

"Philip Westgate! Do you know that that's where Jane Chichester has gone? Her sister told me so yesterday. Do you—do you think she'll get him?"

"Heaven knows! Persistence is a jewel; and the man can't elude her forever."

"Poor Barry!"

"Why poor Barry? He might go farther and fare worse."

"Well, I don't know. I don't think—but it's nothing for me to worry about, after all."

"No."

They walked on in silence for a minute, then Ruth remembered something that she wanted to say to him:

"Philip, there's another thing I want to thank you for. Mrs. Malleson told me. She said it was not to be known. I don't know why she should tell me, but she did. It was about how you prevailed upon Mr. Malleson to take back the men who had left him, and give them their old places. Philip, it was—it was heavenly in you to do that."

They had reached the Tracy house, and were standing for a moment by the newel-post before ascending the steps.

"Yes," said Westgate; "what with peace in the mills, and peace in the church, the storm seems to be about over. There's only one cloud in the sky, and the shadow of that cloud rests on me alone. You can banish it. Everything else has been restored to its normal condition; is it not time for us to get back on

the old footing? I want you. I have always wanted you. I have never wanted you so much as I do to-day. Will you come back to me?"

She looked up into his face with tear-wet eyes.

"Yes, Philip," she said; "I will."

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